

The Masterpiece Library of Short Stories

SET IN 20 VOLUMES

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The Masterpiece Library of Short stories

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The Scottish Story-Tellers

THE first of the stories in this volume is one of the few exceptions that have had to be made in determining the Thousand Best, for though "The Jocular Knight" conforms to the definition of a short story in being a completed episode, it is taken from Tobias Smollett's novel, "Humphrey Clinker," first published in 1770, just as in Volume VII. we have Fielding's "The History of Leonora" from "Joseph Andrews." But in these eighteenth-century novels we find one of the various origins of the short story, the long narratives being occasionally interrupted for variety's sake by the interpolation of minor tales which are often good examples of the short story. "The Jocular Knight" is representative of the humour of a past day, but it is worthy of inclusion as a specimen of the short story in chrysalis and a reflection of the manners of a vanished time.

In "The Story of La Roche" we have an early example of the short story as a literary form distinct from the occasional tale embedded in the long romance. Henry Mackenzie, familiar to generations of Scottish readers as "The Man of Feeling," from his novel of that name, was one of the successful authors and journalists of his time (1745-1831). "The Story of La Roche" is old-fashioned in manner and very typical of its period, which was inclined to melancholy. But it has vivid definition of character; the Swiss pastor, his daughter, and the philosopher are all wonderfully realised in a little space. "Sadik Beg," by Sir John Malcolm (1769-1833), a distinguished orientalist, is of the anecdote variety of short story and in substance occurs in the literature of many countries.

THE genius and method of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) were not particularly favourable to the art of the short story, and it is not surprising that his deliberate efforts in that direction, attempted for "The Keepsake" and other annuals of his time, are of small interest and little literary value. Here and there in his novels we have the germ of what, had he cared to give it full individual treatment, might have made a successful short story, and it would be difficult to equal either in concentrated power of

narrative or in the grip which it immediately makes upon the imagination of the reader, "Wandering Willie's Tale" from "Redgauntlet." Here, to all intents and purposes, is a perfect example of the short story, and although, in a sense, it is but part of a whole, it is a part that is detachable without the introduction of any explanatory line and without the need to know anything of the story whence it is taken.

Scott well knew how to contrive the "grue," as Stevenson liked to call the faculty of thrilling by means of the weird. His friend James Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd" (1770-1835), was more of a poet than a story-teller in prose, but he wrote a considerable number of successful tales. "A Dream of Death" is typical of his manner. It is written in the prose of a poet, has atmosphere, and holds the reader tensely.

The curious gloom that was characteristic of the fiction of the early nineteenth century is to be noted in "The Suicide's Grave" by Thomas Gillespie (1777-1844). This is one of several specimens from Wilson's "Tales of the Borders," and if it reveals no great art, it is at least representative of its time. The weird and the melancholy are to be noted once more in "The Black Ferry," by John Galt (1779-1839). This tale is less typical of its author than of its period. Its method and circumstance are alike admirable, although in these more sophisticated days we should demand something less obvious than its dénouement. "My Grandfather's Story," by Andrew Picken (1788-1833), has much charm of manner despite its triteness of plot—a criticism more applicable to-day than when the story was written.

IF we except "Wandering Willie's Tale," which is supreme in its own way, it might be correct to say that the first of these Scottish writers that touches high-water-mark in this most difficult art is the poet and man of letters, Alan Cunningham, a friend of Hogg and also of Sir Walter Scott. Cunningham, who was born in Dumfriesshire in 1784, moved to London in the early years of the nineteenth century and became a very popular writer, chiefly for the "London Magazine." "The Haunted Ships" is one of his best-known stories. It retains the charm of an age when superstition still clung to many parts of the provinces.

The famous Professor Wilson, "Christopher North" (1785-1854), one of the shining lights of "Blackwood's" in the great days of literary Edinburgh, will probably not be remembered as a writer of short stories, and yet his "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life" contain several choice examples of a story form which certain of his countrymen in a later day have popularised as "the idyll." "Moss-side," chosen from the volume in question, is a lovely and a perfect thing, memorably beautiful in its simplicity.

James Maidment (1794-1879), author of "The Catheran of Lochloy," was one of the ablest contributors to "Tales of the Borders," whence this spirited specimen is taken. The story reads melodramatic to-day.

but it would not when first published, and it may be accepted as an early example of a type that long ago became a cliché and survives now, if at all, in certain of the cheaper periodicals for the young and the working-class. There is an old-world air and a certain fragrance of style in "The Jewel-Hunter" by Henry David Inglis, an early nineteenth century writer of some popularity, from whose book, "Solitary Walks through Many Lands," the tale is taken. Richard Thomson (1794-1865), the next of the Scottish authors here represented, lived most of his life away from his native land and was for upwards of thirty years joint-librarian of the London Institution. "The Piper of Mucklebrowst" and "The Enchanted Hogshead" are very different in character, but both excellent in their respective manners, and both deal with the supernatural, which in those days—the first half of last century—was of all fictional themes the most popular.

WITH David Macbeth Moir's most diverting story, "The Laird's Dinner Party," we come to yet another example of the short story extracted from a longer work. This is an episode from Moir's classic novel of Scottish life, "Mansie Wauch," published in 1828. A mere anecdote, it is told with such broadly humorous effect that its success is undeniable. "The Cheaterie Packman," by Leitch Ritchie, is old-fashioned in form and with a frequent plot, but the story is told with real insight into character and a fine sense of humour. John Mackay Wilson, who was the originator of "Tales of the Borders," himself contributed not a few stories to the series before his untimely death in 1835, at the age of thirty-one. Our editorial choice has fallen upon a very characteristic example of his work in "Archy Armstrong." This is really a romance in little, as it covers a period of time too long to be represented in a short story proper. Yet, in length, it is much less than many a short story of to-day, and the success of the author is seen in the ingenuity with which his technique is equal to the burden of incident.

Moir and
Ritchie

Tales of the
Borders

"Rab and His Friends" is, of course, one of the undying things of our literature. Dr. John Brown's (1810-82) wonderful little masterpiece might strictly be classed as an essay-story, but it is unrivalled in the naïveté and tenderness of its telling. Formless, but brimming with the beauty of a loving heart and a tender humanity, it is real literature; and more than that, it is true, simple life.

Dr John
Brown

"The Double-Bedded Room," by Walter Logan, another of our selections from "Tales of the Borders," touches a different character of writing from any of the stories we have been considering. Here is frank farce of a style peculiar to its period, when the pun flourished and a flashy smartness of words passed too readily for wit. "The Doctor's Ghost" is from the pen of a very prolific writer of tales and sketches. Dr. Norman Macleod (1812-72) always wrote with a certain freshness and never failed to interest his reader.

PROFESSOR AYTOUN (1813-65) was another of the lights of "Blackwood's," now chiefly remembered for his poetry, but his story, "The Man in the Bell," is a very notable one. Suggestive in some respects of "The Pit and the Pendulum," here is a situation so terrifying that in all likelihood it was not the pure creation of the writer's imagination but was more probably suggested by an actual incident related to the narrator, who invested it with all the imagined terror such a situation might be thought to produce.

W. E.
Aytoun

In Dr. George Macdonald we have another Scottish writer whose name we do not readily associate with the short story—except the fairy variety—varied though we know his literary work to have been. "The Wow o' Rivven" is masterly in its exploration of the strange depths of human character. Both in form and plot it is uncommon, the two chief personages being developed with swift and telling strokes, while the characters of the brother and the lover are ingeniously revealed by suggestion only, and without positive effort at delineation.

George
Macdonald

"Le Revenant" is a powerful and original tale from "Blackwood's," and may not be the work of some anonymous Scottish writer, though it is most probably correctly included here, as the contributors to "Maga" in the 'thirties of last century were chiefly Scottish. Another tale from the same source is "The Iron Shroud." Here we have a mixture of Jane Porter as to style and Edgar Allan Poe as to plot. It is essentially "a tale of terror." Yet another anonymous story is "The Siege of Cocklaws," from "Tales of the Borders," and it comes in its place with a delightful sense of relief from the "grue" of "The Iron Shroud." Perfectly told, with a high sense of humour and a kindly interest in character, every stroke makes for effect: a better portrait of a good-natured braggart would be difficult to find.

Anonymous
Tales

CHARLES GIBBON (1843-90), author of "A Legend of '45," a once popular novelist, was not notable as a writer of short stories, but in this example, conventional though the dramatic interest may be, we have a tale well told. Originally an excerpt from his novel "For Lack of Gold," the item as here given was arranged and edited for publication as a complete story by the author himself.

Andrew Lang (1844-1912) will be long and best remembered for his dainty verse and brilliant criticism of men and books. A great scholar and one of the most variously accomplished literary men of his age, he turned from time to time to story-writing and usually with distinction, if not always with notable success. "In the Wrong Paradise" is the best example of a fictional form for which he had a peculiar affection; the apologue-story affording him an effective vehicle for the expression of his somewhat sardonic views on life. Essentially a scholar's story, it is artistically excellent and amusing. "In the Wrong Paradise" was published in 1886.

Andrew
Lang

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, born at Edinburgh, November 13, 1850, ranks securely among the foremost writers of the English language who have practised with real seriousness the delicate and difficult art of the short story. If a consensus of literary opinion were obtainable, it is probable that of the British authors of the last forty years, Rudyard Kipling and R. L. Stevenson would be most readily voted the two chief writers of the short story. Kipling would doubtless have the greater suffrage, as he has devoted himself chiefly to that literary form, and has succeeded in it more notably than in his efforts at the long-sustained narrative. Stevenson, on the other hand, shows an equal command of his medium in the novel and the tale, and when we remember the enamelled perfection of his travel sketches and his essays, the enduring charm and beauty of his verse, we must concede him to be the greater artist of the two. Certainly, in the series of selections from his short stories which the editors are able to include in this volume, every phase of the art is brilliantly illustrated. From no other British writer would it be possible to make a similar selection where each story would touch the same high-water mark of achievement. The artistry of all these stories is superb. The critical reader feels in studying them something of the sheer delight their author himself must have experienced in the writing. He succeeds in conveying to his reader a hint of that joy of achievement which is the artist's best reward. There is a glorious confidence of mastery in them all; yet the themes are curiously varied and there is no repetition of effect.

Robert
Louis
Stevenson

In "Thrawn Janet" we have one of Stevenson's most remarkable short stories. The superstitious and the weird have never been better handled than in this unforgettable tale, which, by the way, is the only one of the series that draws its local colour from the author's native land. "Markheim" is a model of what a story should be. Not only does the author's extraordinary power of freighting his sentences with meaning enable us to see into the very soul of Markheim, but the psychological movement is realised as clearly and vividly as the dramatic action is described, and it ends with a surprise, which, on reflection, was the only possible end. Not one word seems wasted in the telling. "Will o' the Mill" is a piece of philosophy, in story form, contrasting sharply in conception and execution with the two preceding tales. The supple beauty of Stevenson's style could not be better exemplified than in this most graceful composition, wherein quietness, repose and the great silent things of life and destiny are all so wondrously suggested. Then comes a change of dramatic suddenness in "A Lodging for the Night," with its romantic treatment of a picturesque rascal. There is romance in this somewhat grisly story and especially that interest in criminal character which led Stevenson to study Deacon Brodie and to write "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." "The Sire de Malétoit's Door" is another masterpiece of the romantic tale. It is the terror of what is happening behind the bolted door that is the culminating point of interest in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," but the

picturesque use of the door could not be better imagined than in this fascinating story of the adventure with the Sire de Malétroit.

MR. R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, who was born in 1852, comes of an old Scottish family, but his most Scottish characteristic is his cosmopolitanism. A great traveller, a sojourner in strange and far lands, he has written many fine stories of countries so far apart as Argentina and Iceland, and everything from his pen is informed with something of his own picturesque and unconventional personality. The turn of his phrase is always fresh and unexpected. Some of his South American stories might be thought more characteristic than that chosen for inclusion in this volume, but "Snackoll's Saga" is unquestionably a masterpiece of the story-teller's art.

In passing from Mr. Cunninghame Graham to S. R. Crockett, one is reminded that in common with many another "brither Scot" the former did not look with an approving eye on the rise of the so-called "Kailyaird school," and certain of its exponents, including the late S. R. Crockett, came under the lash of his criticism. It is, therefore, not a little curious to find the two represented here side by side. On the whole, I incline to think that even Mr. Cunninghame Graham would not take exception to these two well-known and popular stories, "The Stickit Minister" and "The Lamma's Preaching." They are thoroughly representative of their school—a school whose star has set and whose vogue, after all, was short-lived. Of the group of writers identified with it Crockett was unquestionably the best, considered purely as a story-teller.

MR. NEIL MUNRO is widely recognised as a master of the short story, whose work is as fresh and original as Kipling's, albeit greatly different both in content and form. To read for the first time the group of stories in the volume entitled "The Lost Pibroch" is to feel that one has entered a region hitherto unknown. The strange and elusive charm of the Gaelic folk is conveyed in these stories in the most penetrating way. The tales are all very short, their effects are achieved with a fine economy of words, and the ingenious literary style is made to convey something of Gaelic mysticism which could scarcely be interpreted in ordinary uncoloured English. "The Fell Sergeant," selected from the series in question, is very simple in plot yet wonderfully moving in its circumstance. It is assuredly an example of the work of a born story-teller, well worthy to rank with that master of the craft, R. L. S.

Our last item is a typical tale by Mr. J. J. Bell, who first came into note in 1902 with his delightfully humorous sketches of Glasgow working-class life, "Wee Macgregor." "The Good Fairy" is a crisp, bright story of boy life, and it is as an interpreter of the younger folk that Mr. Bell has excelled.

J. A. H.

TOBIAS GEORGE SMOLLETT

1721-1771

THE JOCULAR KNIGHT

I BELIEVE there is something mischievous in my disposition, for nothing diverts me so much as to see certain characters tormented with false terrors. We last night lodged at the house of Sir Thomas Bulford, an old friend of my uncle, a jolly fellow, of moderate intellects, who, in spite of the gout, which hath lamed him, is resolved to be merry to the last ; and mirth he has a particular knack in extracting from his guests, let their humour be ever so caustic or refractory. Besides our company, there was in the house a fat-headed justice of the peace, called Frogmore, and a country practitioner in surgery, who seemed to be our landlord's chief companion and confidant.

We found the knight sitting on a couch, with his crutches by his side, and his feet supported on cushions ; but he received us with a hearty welcome, and seemed greatly rejoiced at our arrival. After tea we were entertained with a sonata on the harpsichord, by Lady Bulford, who sang and played to admiration ; but Sir Thomas seemed to be a little asinine in the article of ears, though he affected to be in raptures ; and begged his wife to favour us with an *arietta* of her own composing. This *arietta*, however, she no sooner began to perform than he and the justice fell asleep ; but the moment she ceased playing the knight waked snorting, and exclaimed, "*O cara !* what d'ye think, gentlemen ? Will you talk any more of your Pergolesi and your Corelli ? "

At the same time he thrust his tongue in one cheek, and leered with one eye at the doctor and me, who sat on his left hand. He concluded the pantomime with a loud laugh, which he could command at all times extempore. Notwithstanding his disorder, he did not do penance at supper, nor did he ever refuse his glass when the toast went round, but rather encouraged a quick circulation, both by precept and example.

I soon perceived the doctor had made himself very necessary to the knight : he was the whetstone of his wit, the butt of his satire, and his operator in certain experiments of humour which were occasionally

tried on strangers. Justice Frogmore was an excellent subject for this species of philosophy : sleek and corpulent, solemn and shallow, he had studied Burn ¹ with uncommon application ; but he studied nothing so much as the art of living (that is, eating) well.

This fat buck had often afforded good sport to our landlord ; and he was frequently started with tolerable success in the course of this evening ; but the knight's appetite for ridicule seemed to be chiefly excited by the appearance, address, and conversation of Captain Lismahago, whom he attempted in all the different modes of exposition. He put me in mind of a contest that I once saw between a young hound and an old hedgehog. The dog turned him over and over, and bounced, and barked, and mumbled ; but as often as he attempted to bite, he felt a prickle in his jaws, and recoiled in manifest confusion. The captain, when left to himself, will not fail to turn his ludicrous side to the company ; but if any man attempts to force him into that attitude, he becomes stubborn as a mule, and unmanageable as an elephant unbroken.

Divers tolerable jokes were cracked on the justice, who ate a most unconscionable supper, and, among other things, a large plate of boiled mushrooms, which he had no sooner swallowed than the doctor observed, with great gravity, that they were of the kind called *champignons*, which in some constitutions had a poisonous effect.

Mr. Frogmore, startled at this remark, asked, in some confusion, why he had not been so kind as to give him that notice sooner ? He answered that he took it for granted, by his eating them so heartily, that he was used to the dish ; but as he seemed to be under some apprehension, he prescribed a bumper of plague-water, which the justice drank off immediately, and retired to rest, not without marks of terror and disquiet.

At midnight we were shown to our different chambers, and in half an hour I was fast asleep in bed ; but about three o'clock in the morning I was awaked with a dismal cry of " Fire ! " and, starting up, ran to the window in my shirt. The night was dark and stormy ; and a number of people, half dressed, ran backwards and forwards through the courtyard, with links and lanterns, seemingly in the utmost hurry and trepidation.

Slipping on my clothes in a twinkling, I ran downstairs, and, on inquiry, found the fire was confined to a back stair, which led to a

¹ Burn's *Justice of Peace*.

detached apartment where Lismahago lay. By this time the captain was alarmed by a bawling at his window, which was in the second story, but he could not find his clothes in the dark, and his room-door was locked on the outside. The servants called to him that the house had been robbed; that, without doubt, the villains had taken away his clothes, fastened the door, and set the house on fire, for the staircase was in flames.

In this dilemma the poor captain ran about the room naked, like a squirrel in a cage, popping out his head at the window between whiles, and imploring assistance. At length the knight in person was brought out in his chair, attended by my uncle and all the family, including our aunt Tabitha, who screamed, and cried, and tore her hair, as if she had been distracted. Sir Thomas had already ordered his people to bring a long ladder, which was applied to the captain's window, and now he exhorted him earnestly to descend. There was no need of much rhetoric to persuade Lismahago, who forthwith made his exit by the window, roaring all the time to the people below to hold fast the ladder.

Notwithstanding the gravity of the occasion, it was impossible to behold this scene without being seized with an inclination to laugh. The rueful aspect of the captain in his shirt, with a quilted nightcap, fastened under his chin, and his long lank limbs and haunches exposed to the wind, made a very picturesque appearance when illuminated by the links and torches which the servants held up to light him in his descent. All the company stood round the ladder except the knight, who sat in his chair, exclaiming from time to time :

"Lord, have mercy on us!—save the gentleman's life—mind your footing, dear captain!—softly!—stand fast!—clasp the ladder with both hands there!—well done, my dear boy!—O, bravo!—an old soldier for ever!—bring a blanket—bring a warm blanket to comfort his poor carcass—warm the bed in the green-room—give me your hand, dear captain—I'm rejoiced to see thee safe and sound, with all my heart."

Lismahago was received at the foot of the ladder by his inamorata, who, snatching a blanket from one of the maids, wrapped it about his body; two men-servants took him under their arms, and a female conducted him to the green-room, still accompanied by Mrs. Tabitha, who saw him fairly put to bed. During this whole transaction he spoke not a syllable, but looked exceeding grim, sometimes at one,

sometimes at another of the spectators, who now adjourned in a body to the parlour where we had supped, every one surveying another with marks of astonishment and curiosity.

The knight being seated in an easy-chair, seized my uncle by the hand, and, bursting into a long and loud laugh—

“Mat,” cried he, “crown me with oak, or ivy, or laurel, or parsley, or what you will, and acknowledge this to be a *coup de matre* in the way of waggery—ha, ha, ha! Such a *camisicata, scagliata, beffata*! *O che roba*! O what a subject! O what a *caricatura*! O for a Rosa, a Rembrandt, a Schalken! Zooks, I’ll give a hundred guineas to have it painted—what a fine descent from the cross, or ascent to the gallows! what lights and shadows! what a group below! what expression above! what an aspect! Did you mind the aspect? Ha, ha, ha! and the limbs, and the muscles—every toe denoted terror! ha, ha, ha! Then the blanket! O what *costume*! St. Andrew! St. Lazarus! St. Barsabas! ha, ha, ha!”

“After all, then,” cried Mr. Bramble, very gravely, “this was no more than a false alarm? We have been frightened out of our beds, and almost out of our senses, for the joke’s sake!”

“Ay, and such a joke!” cried our landlord—“such a farce! such a *dénouement*! such a *catastrophe*!”

“Have a little patience,” replied our squire; “we are not yet come to the *catastrophe*; and pray God it may not turn out a tragedy instead of a farce. The captain is one of those saturnine subjects who have no idea of humour. He never laughs in his own person; nor can he bear that other people should laugh at his expense. Besides, if the subject had been properly chosen, the joke was too severe in all conscience.”

“’Sdeath!” cried the knight, “I could not have bated him an ace, had he been my own father; and as for the subject, such another does not present itself once in half a century.”

Here Mrs. Tabitha interposing, and bridling up, declared she did not see that Mr. Lismahago was a fitter subject for ridicule than the knight himself; and that she was very much afraid he would very soon find he had mistaken his man. The knight was a good deal disconcerted by this intimation, saying that he must be a Goth and a barbarian if he did not enter into the spirit of such a happy and humorous contrivance. He begged, however, that Mr. Bramble and his sister would bring him to reason; and this request was reinforced by Lady Bulford,

who did not fail to read the knight a lecture on his indiscretion, which lecture he received with submission on one side of the face, and a leer on the other.

We now went to bed for the second time ; and before I got up, my uncle had visited Lismahago in the green-room, and used such arguments with him, that, when we met in the parlour, he seemed to be quite appeased. He received the knight's apology with a good grace, and even professed himself pleased at finding he had contributed to the diversion of the company. Sir Thomas shook him by the hand, laughing heartily ; and then desired a pinch of snuff, in token of perfect reconciliation. The captain, putting his hand in his waistcoat-pocket, pulled out, instead of his own Scotch mull, a very fine gold snuff-box, which he no sooner perceived than he said :

" Here is a small mistake."

" No mistake at all," cried the knight ; " a fair exchange is no robbery. Oblige me so far, captain, as to let me keep your mull as a memorial."

" Sir," said the captain, " the mull is much at your service, but this machine I can by no means retain. It looks like compounding a sort of felony in the code of honour. Besides, I don't know but there may be another joke in this conveyance ; and I don't find myself disposed to be brought on the stage again : I won't presume to make free with your pockets, but I beg you will put it up again with your own hand."

So saying, with a certain austerity of aspect he presented the snuff-box to the knight, who received it in some confusion, and restored the mull, which he would by no means keep, except on the terms of exchange.

This transaction was like to give a grave cast to the conversation, when my uncle took notice that Mr. Justice Frogmore had not made his appearance either at the night alarm, or now at the general rendezvous. The knight, hearing Frogmore mentioned—

" Odso ! " cried he, " I had forgotten the justice. Prithee, doctor, go and bring him out of his kennel."

Then, laughing till his sides were well shaken, he said he would show the captain that he was not the only person of the drama exhibited for the entertainment of the company. As to the night scene, it could not affect the justice, who had been purposely lodged in the further

end of the house, remote from the noise, and lulled with a dose of opium into the bargain.

In a few minutes Mr. Justice was led into the parlour in his night-cap and loose morning-gown, rolling his head from side to side, and groaning piteously all the way.

"Why! neighbour Frogmore," exclaimed the knight, "what is the matter? you look as if you were not a man for this world. Set him down softly on the couch—poor gentleman! Lord, have mercy on us! What makes him so pale, and yellow, and bloated?"

"Oh, Sir Thomas!" cried the justice, "I doubt it is all over with me: those mushrooms I ate at your table have done my business—ah! oh! hey!"

"Now, the Lord forbid!" said the other. "What, man! have a good heart. How does thy stomach feel? ha!"

To this interrogation he made no reply, but throwing aside his night-gown discovered that his waistcoat would not meet on him by five good inches at least.

"Heaven protect us all!" cried Sir Thomas, "what a melancholy spectacle! Never did I see a man so suddenly swelled but when he was either just dead or just dying. Doctor, canst thou do nothing for this poor object?"

"I don't think the case is quite desperate," said the surgeon, "but I would advise Mr. Frogmore to settle his affairs with all expedition; the parson may come and pray by him, while I prepare a clyster and an emetic draught."

The justice, rolling his languid eyes, ejaculated with great fervency, "Lord, have mercy on us!"

Then he begged the surgeon to despatch. "As for my worldly affairs," said he, "they are all settled but one mortgage, which must be left to my heirs; but my poor soul! my poor soul! what will become of my poor soul!—miserable sinner that I am!"

"Nay, prithee, my dear boy, compose thyself," resumed the knight; "consider, the mercy of Heaven is infinite; thou canst not have any sins of a very deep dye on thy conscience, or the devil's in't."

"Name not the devil," exclaimed the terrified Frogmore; "I have more sins to answer for than the world dreams of. Ah, friend, I have been sly—sly—d——d sly! Send for the parson without loss of time, and put me to bed, for I am posting to eternity."

He was accordingly raised from the couch, and supported by two

servants, who led him back to his room ; but before he quitted the parlour he entreated the good company to assist him with their prayers.

He added : " Take warning by me, who am suddenly cut off in my prime, like a flower of the field ; and Heaven forgive you, Sir Thomas, for suffering such poisonous trash to be eaten at your table."

He was no sooner removed out of hearing than the knight abandoned himself to a violent fit of laughing, in which he was joined by the greater part of the company ; but we could hardly prevent the good lady from going to undeceive the patient, by discovering that, while he slept, his waistcoat had been straitened by the contrivance of the surgeon, and that the disorder in his stomach and bowels was occasioned by some antimonial wine, which he had taken overnight, under the denomination of plague-water. She seemed to think that his apprehension might put an end to his life : the knight swore he was no such chicken, but a tough old rogue, that would live long enough to plague all his neighbours.

On inquiry, we found his character did not entitle him to much compassion or respect, and therefore we let our landlord's humour take its course. A clyster was actually administered by an old woman of the family, who had been Sir Thomas's nurse, and the patient took a draught made with oxymel of squills to forward the operation of the antimonial wine, which had been retarded by the opiate of the preceding night. He was visited by the vicar, who read prayers, and began to take an account of the state of his soul. The knight and I, with the doctor, entered the chamber at this juncture, and found Frogmore crying for mercy, confessing his sins, or asking the vicar's opinion of his case ; and the vicar answered in a solemn, snuffling tone, that heightened the ridicule of the scene. The emetic having done its office, the doctor interfered, and ordered the patient to be put to bed again. He declared that much of the *virus* was discharged ; and, giving him a composing draught, assured him he had good hopes of his recovery. This welcome hint he received with tears of joy in his eyes, protesting that, if he should recover, he would always think himself indebted for his life to the great skill and tenderness of his doctor, whose hands he squeezed with great fervour ; and thus he was left to his repose.

We were pressed to stay dinner, that we might be witnesses of his resuscitation , but my uncle insisted on our departing before noon, that we might reach this town before it should be dark. In the mean-

time Lady Bulford conducted us into the garden to see a fish-pond, just finished, which Mr. Bramble censured as being too near the parlour, where the knight now sat by himself, dozing in an elbow-chair, after the fatigues of his morning achievement.

In this situation he reclined, with his feet wrapped in flannel, and supported in a line with his body, when, the door flying open with a violent shock, Captain Lismahago rushed into the room, with horror in his looks, exclaiming, "A mad dog! a mad dog!" and throwing up the window-sash, leaped into the garden. Sir Thomas, waked by this tremendous exclamation, started up, and, forgetting his gout, followed the captain's example by a kind of instinctive impulse. He not only bolted through the window like an arrow from a bow, but ran up to his middle in the pond before he gave the least sign of recollection. Then the captain began to bawl, "Lord, have mercy on us! pray take care of the gentleman!—mind your footing, my dear boy!—get warm blankets—comfort his poor carcass—warm the bed in the green-room!"

Lady Bulford was thunderstruck at this phenomenon, and the rest of the company gazed in silent astonishment, while the servants hastened to assist their master, who suffered himself to be carried back into the parlour without speaking a word. Being instantly accommodated with dry clothes and flannels, comforted with a cordial, and replaced *in statu quo*, one of the maids was ordered to chafe his lower extremities, an operation in consequence of which his senses seemed to return, and his good-humour to revive. As we had followed him into the room, he looked at every individual in his turn, with a certain ludicrous expression of countenance, but fixed his eye in particular on Lismahago, who presented him with a pinch of snuff.

"Sir Thomas Bulford," said he, "I am much obliged to you for all your favours, and some of them I have endeavoured to repay in your own coin."

"Give me thy hand," cried the knight; "thou hast indeed paid me 'scot and lot'; and even left a balance in my hands, for which, in presence of this company, I promise to be accountable."

So saying, he laughed very heartily; but Lady Bulford looked very grave, and in all probability thought the captain had carried his resentment too far, considering that her husband was valetudinary; but, according to the proverb, "he that will play at bowls must expect to meet with rubbers."

HENRY MACKENZIE

1745-1881

THE STORY OF LA ROCHE

MORE than forty years ago an English philosopher, whose works have since been read and admired by all Europe, resided at a little town in France. Some disappointments in his native country had first driven him abroad, and he was afterwards induced to remain there from having found in this retreat, where the connections even of nation and language were avoided, a perfect seclusion and retirement highly favourable to the development of abstract subjects, in which he excelled all the writers of his time.

Perhaps, in the structure of such a mind as Mr. —'s, the finer and more delicate sensibilities are seldom known to have place, or, if originally implanted there, are in a great measure extinguished by the exertions of intense study and profound investigation. Hence the idea of philosophy and unfeelingness being united has become proverbial, and in common language the former word is often used to express the latter. Our philosopher has been censured by some as deficient in warmth and feeling, but the mildness of his manners has been allowed by all; and it is certain that, if he was not easily melted into compassion, it was, at least, not difficult to awaken his benevolence.

One morning, while he sat busied in those speculations which afterwards astonished the world, an old female domestic, who served him for a housekeeper, brought him word that an elderly gentleman and his daughter had arrived in the village, the preceding evening, on their way to some distant country, and that the father had been suddenly seized in the night with a dangerous disorder, which the people of the inn where they lodged feared would prove mortal; that she had been sent for, as having some knowledge in medicine, the village surgeon being then absent; and that it was truly piteous to see the good old man, who seemed not so much afflicted by his own distress as by that which it caused to his daughter.—Her master laid aside the volume in his hand, and broke off the chain of ideas it had

inspired. His night-gown was exchanged for a coat, and he followed his *gouvernante* to the sick man's apartment.

'Twas the best in the little inn where they lay, but a paltry one notwithstanding. Mr. — was obliged to stoop as he entered it. It was floored with earth, and above were the joists not plastered, and hung with cobwebs. On a flock-bed, at one end, lay the old man he came to visit ; at the foot of it sat his daughter. She was dressed in a clean white bed-gown ; her dark locks hung loosely over it as she bent forward, watching the languid looks of her father. Mr. — and his housekeeper had stood some moments in the room without the young lady's being sensible of their entering it.

" Mademoiselle ! " said the old woman at last, in a soft tone.

She turned and showed one of the finest faces in the world. It was touched, not spoiled with sorrow, and when she perceived a stranger, whom the old woman now introduced to her, a blush at first, and then the gentle ceremonial of native politeness, which the affliction of the time tempered but did not extinguish, crossed it for a moment, and changed its expression. 'Twas sweetness all, however, and our philosopher felt it strongly. It was not a time for words ; he offered his services in a few sincere ones.

" Monsieur lies miserably ill here," said the *gouvernante* ; " if he could possibly be moved anywhere."

" If he could be moved to our house," said her master.

He had a spare bed for a friend, and there was a garret room unoccupied, next to the *gouvernante's*. It was contrived accordingly. The scruples of the stranger, who could look scruples, though he could not speak them, were overcome, and the bashful reluctance of his daughter gave way to her belief of its use to her father. The sick man was wrapped in blankets, and carried across the street to the English gentleman's. The old woman helped his daughter to nurse him there. The surgeon, who arrived soon after, prescribed a little, and nature did much for him ; in a week he was able to thank his benefactor.

By that time his host had learned the name and character of his guest. He was a Protestant clergyman of Switzerland, called La Roche, a widower, who had lately buried his wife, after a long and lingering illness, for which travelling had been prescribed, and was now returning home, after an ineffectual and melancholy journey, with his only child, the daughter we have mentioned.

He was a devout man, as became his profession. He possessed devotion in all its warmth, but with none of its asperity ; I mean that asperity which men, called devout, sometimes indulge in. Mr. —, though he felt no devotion, never quarrelled with it in others. His *gouvernante* joined the old man and his daughter in the prayers and thanksgivings which they put up on his recovery—for she, too, was a heretic, in the phrase of the village. The philosopher walked out, with his long staff and his dog, and left them to their prayers and thanksgivings.

"My master," said the old woman, "alas ! he is not a Christian ; but he is the best of unbelievers."

"Not a Christian !" exclaimed Mademoiselle La Roche, "yet he saved my father ! Heaven bless him for't ; I would he were a Christian !"

"There is a pride in human knowledge, my child," said her father, "which often blinds men to the sublime truths of revelation ; hence opposers of Christianity are found among men of virtuous lives, as well as among those of dissipated and licentious characters. Nay, sometimes I have known the latter more easily converted to the true faith than the former, because the fume of passion is more easily dissipated than the mist of false theory and delusive speculation."

"But Mr. —," said his daughter, "alas ! my father, he shall be a Christian before he dies."

She was interrupted by the arrival of their landlord. He took her hand with an air of kindness : she drew it away from him in silence, threw down her eyes to the ground, and left the room.

"I have been thanking God," said the good La Roche, "for my recovery."

"That is right," replied his landlord.

"I would not wish," continued the old man, hesitatingly, "to think otherwise ; did I not look up with gratitude to that Being, I should barely be satisfied with my recovery, as a continuation of life, which, it may be, is not a real good. Alas ! I may live to wish I had died, that you had left me to die, sir, instead of kindly relieving me (he clasped Mr. —'s hand) ; but, when I look on this renovated being as the gift of the Almighty, I feel a far different sentiment—my heart dilates with gratitude and love to Him ; it is prepared for doing His will, not as a duty, but as a pleasure, and regards every breach of it, not with disapprobation, but with horror."

"You say right, my dear sir," replied the philosopher, "but you are not yet re-established enough to talk much—you must take care of your health, and neither study nor preach for some time. I have been thinking over a scheme that struck me to-day, when you mentioned your intended departure. I never was in Switzerland; I have a great mind to accompany your daughter and you into that country. I will help to take care of you by the road; for, as I was your first physician, I hold myself responsible for your cure."

La Roche's eyes glistened at the proposal; his daughter was called in and told of it. She was equally pleased with her father; for they really loved their landlord—not perhaps the less for his infidelity; at least that circumstance mixed a sort of pity with their regard for him—their souls were not of a mould for harsher feelings; hatred never dwelt in them.

They travelled by short stages; for the philosopher was as good as his word in taking care that the old man should not be fatigued. The party had time to be well acquainted with one another, and their friendship was increased by acquaintance. La Roche found a degree of simplicity and gentleness in his companion, which is not always annexed to the character of a learned or a wise man. His daughter, who was prepared to be afraid of him, was equally undeceived. She found in him nothing of that self-importance which superior parts, or great cultivation of them, is apt to confer. He talked of everything but philosophy or religion; he seemed to enjoy every pleasure and amusement of ordinary life, and to be interested in the most common topics of discourse; when his knowledge or learning at any time appeared, it was delivered with the utmost plainness, and without the least shadow of dogmatism.

On his part, he was charmed with the society of the good clergyman and his lovely daughter. He found in them the guileless manner of the earliest times, with the culture and accomplishment of the most refined ones. Every better feeling, warm and vivid; every ungentle one, repressed or overcome. He was not addicted to love; but he felt himself happy in being the friend of Mademoiselle La Roche, and sometimes envied her father the possession of such a child.

After a journey of eleven days they arrived at the dwelling of La Roche. It was situated in one of those valleys of the canton of Berne, where nature seems to repose, as it were, in quiet, and has inclosed her retreat with mountains inaccessible. A stream, that spent its

fury in the hills above, ran in front of the house, and a broken waterfall was seen through the wood that covered its sides ; below, it circled round a tufted plain, and formed a little lake in front of a village, at the end of which appeared the spire of La Roche's church, rising above a clump of beeches.

Mr. ——— enjoyed the beauty of the scene ; but to his companions it recalled the memory of a wife and parent they had lost. The old man's sorrow was silent ; his daughter sobbed and wept. Her father took her hand, kissed it twice, pressed it to his bosom, threw up his eyes to heaven ; and, having wiped off a tear that was just about to drop from each, began to point out to his guest some of the most striking objects which the prospect afforded. The philosopher interpreted all this ; and he could but slightly censure the creed from which it arose.

They had not been long arrived, when a number of La Roche's parishioners, who had heard of his return, came to the house to see and welcome him. The honest folks were awkward, but sincere, in their professions of regard. They made some attempts at condolence ; it was too delicate for their handling ; but La Roche took it in good part. " It has pleased God," said he ; and they saw he had settled the matter with himself. Philosophy could not have done so much with a thousand words.

It was now evening, and the good peasants were about to depart, when a clock was heard to strike seven, and the hour was followed by a particular chime. The country folks, who had come to welcome their pastor, turned their looks towards him at the sound ; he explained their meaning to his guest. " That is the signal," said he, " for our evening exercise ; this is one of the nights of the week in which some of my parishioners are wont to join in it ; a little rustic saloon serves for the chapel of our family, and such of the good people as are with us ; —if you choose rather to walk out, I will furnish you with an attendant ; or here are a few old books that may afford you some entertainment within."

" By no means," answered the philosopher ; " I will attend Mademoiselle at her devotions."

" She is our organist," said La Roche ; " our neighbourhood is the country of musical mechanism ; and I have a small organ fitted up for the purpose of assisting our singing."

" 'Tis an additional inducement," replied the other : and they

walked into the room together. At the end stood the organ mentioned by La Roche ; before it was a curtain, which his daughter drew aside, and placing herself on a seat within, and drawing the curtain close, so as to save her the awkwardness of an exhibition, began a voluntary, solemn and beautiful in the highest degree. Mr. — was no musician, but he was not altogether insensible to music ; this fastened on his mind more strongly, from its beauty being unexpected. The solemn prelude introduced a hymn, in which such of the audience as could sing immediately joined ; the words were mostly taken from holy writ ; it spoke the praises of God, and His care of good men. Something was said of the death of the just, of such as die in the Lord. The organ was touched with a hand less firm ;—it paused, it ceased ;—and the sobbing of Mademoiselle La Roche was heard in its stead. Her father gave a sign for stopping the psalmody, and rose to pray. He was discomposed at first, and his voice faltered as he spoke ; but his heart was in his words, and his warmth overcame his embarrassment. He addressed a Being whom he loved, and he spoke for those he loved. His parishioners caught the ardour of the good old man ; even the philosopher felt himself moved, and forgot for a moment to think why he should not.

La Roche's religion was that of sentiment, not theory, and his guest was averse from disputation ; their discourse, therefore, did not lead to questions concerning the belief of either ; yet would the old man sometimes speak of his, from the fulness of a heart impressed with its force, and wishing to spread the pleasure he enjoyed in it. The ideas of his God and his Saviour were so congenial to his mind that every emotion of it naturally awakened them. A philosopher might have called him an enthusiast ; but, if he possessed the fervour of enthusiasts, he was guiltless of their bigotry. " Our Father which art in heaven ! " might the good man say—for he felt it—and all mankind were his brethren.

" You regret, my friend," said he to Mr. —, " when my daughter and I talk of the exquisite pleasure derived from music, you regret your want of musical powers and musical feelings ; it is a department of soul, you say, which nature has almost denied you, which, from the effects you see it have on others, you are sure must be highly delightful. Why should not the same thing be said of religion ? Trust me, I feel it in the same way an energy, an inspiration, which I would not lose for all the blessings of sense, or enjoyments of the world ; yet, so far

from lessening my relish of the pleasures of life, methinks I feel it heighten them all. The thought of receiving it from God adds the blessing of sentiment to that of sensation in every good thing I possess ; and when calamities overtake me—and I have had my share—it confers a dignity on my affliction—so lifts me above the world. Man, I know, is but a worm—yet, methinks, I am then allied to God ! ”

It would have been inhuman in our philosopher to have clouded, even with a doubt, the sunshine of this belief. His discourse, indeed, was very remote from metaphysical disquisition or religious controversy. Of all men I ever knew, his ordinary conversation was the least tinctured with pedantry, or liable to dissertation. With La Roche and his daughter it was perfectly familiar. The country round them, the manners of the village, the comparison of both with those of England, remarks on the works of favourite authors, on the sentiments they conveyed and the passions they excited, with many other topics, in which there was an equality, or alternate advantage, among the speakers, were the subjects they talked on. Their hours too of riding and walking were many, in which Mr. —, as a stranger, was shown the remarkable scenes and curiosities of the country. They would sometimes make little expeditions to contemplate, in different attitudes, those astonishing mountains the cliffs of which, covered with eternal snows, and sometimes shooting into fantastic shapes, form the termination of most of the Swiss prospects.

Our philosopher asked many questions as to their natural history and productions. La Roche observed the sublimity of the ideas which the view of their stupendous summits, inaccessible to mortal foot, was calculated to inspire, which naturally, said he, leads the mind to that Being by whom their foundations were laid.

“ They are not seen in Flanders ! ” said Mademoiselle with a sigh.

“ That’s an odd remark,” said Mr. —, smiling. She blushed, and he inquired no farther.

’Twas with regret he left a society in which he found himself so happy, but he settled with La Roche and his daughter a plan of correspondence ; and they took his promise that if ever he came within fifty leagues of their dwelling he should travel those fifty leagues to visit them.

About three years after our philosopher was on a visit at Geneva ;

the promise he made to La Roche and his daughter, on his former visit, was recalled to his mind by the view of that range of mountains, on a part of which they had often looked together. There was a reproach, too, conveyed along with the recollection for his having failed to write to either for several months past. The truth was that indolence was the habit most natural to him, from which he was not easily roused by the claims of correspondence either of his friends or of his enemies ; when the latter drew their pens in controversy they were often unanswered as well as the former.

While he was hesitating about a visit to La Roche, which he wished to make, but found the effort rather too much for him, he received a letter from the old man, which had been forwarded to him from Paris, where he had then his fixed residence. It contained a gentle complaint of Mr. ——'s want of punctuality, but an assurance of continued gratitude for his former good offices ; and, as a friend whom the writer considered interested in his family, it informed him of the approaching nuptials of Mademoiselle La Roche with a young man, a relation of her own, and formerly a pupil of her father's, of the most amiable disposition and respectable character. Attached from their earliest years, they had been separated by his joining one of the subsidiary regiments of the canton, then in the service of a foreign power. In this situation he had distinguished himself as much for courage and military skill as for the other endowments which he had cultivated at home. The term of his service was now expired, and they expected him to return in a few weeks, when the old man hoped, as he expressed it in his letter, to join their hands, and see them happy before he died.

Our philosopher felt himself interested in this event ; but he was not, perhaps, altogether so happy in the tidings of Mademoiselle La Roche's marriage as her father supposed him. Not that he was ever a lover of the ladies ; but he thought her one of the most amiable women he had seen, and there was something in the idea of her being another's for ever that struck him, he knew not why, like a disappointment. After some little speculation on the matter, however, he could look on it as a thing fitting, if not quite agreeable, and determined on this visit to see his old friend and his daughter happy.

On the last day of his journey different accidents had retarded his progress ; he was benighted before he reached the quarter in which La Roche resided. His guide, however, was well acquainted with the road, and he found himself at last in view of the lake, which I have

before described, in the neighbourhood of La Roche's dwelling. A light gleamed on the water that seemed to proceed from the house ; it moved slowly along as he proceeded up the side of the lake, and at last he saw it glimmer through the trees, and stop at some distance from the place where he then was. He supposed it some piece of bridal merriment, and pushed on his horse that he might be a spectator of the scene ; but he was a good deal shocked, on approaching the spot, to find it proceed from the torch of a person clothed in the dress of an attendant on a funeral, and accompanied by several others who, like him, seemed to have been employed in the rites of sepulture.

On Mr. ——'s making inquiry who was the person they had been burying, one of them, with an accent more mournful than is common to their profession, answered, " Then you knew not Mademoiselle, sir !—you never beheld a lovelier."

" La Roche ! " exclaimed he in reply.

" Alas ! it was she indeed ! "

The appearance of surprise and grief which his countenance assumed attracted the notice of the peasant with whom he talked. He came up closer to Mr. ——.

" I perceive, sir, you were acquainted with Mademoiselle La Roche."

" Acquainted with her !—Good God !—when—how—where did she die ? Where is her father ? "

" She died, sir, of heart-break, I believe ; the young gentleman to whom she was soon to have been married was killed in a duel by a French officer, his intimate companion, and to whom, before their quarrel, he had often done the greatest favours. Her worthy father bears her death as he has often told us a Christian should ; he is even so composed as to be now in his pulpit ready to deliver a few exhortations to his parishioners, as is the custom with us on such occasions. Follow me, sir, and you shall hear him." He followed the man without answering.

The church was dimly lighted, except near the pulpit, where the venerable La Roche was seated. His people were now lifting up their voices in a psalm to that Being whom their pastor had taught them ever to bless and to revere. La Roche sat, his figure bending gently forward, his eyes half closed, lifted up in silent devotion. A lamp placed near him threw its light strong on his head, and marked the

shadowy lines of age across the paleness of his brow, thinly covered with grey hairs.

The music ceased. La Roche sat for a moment, and nature wrung a few tears from him. His people were loud in their grief. Mr. — was not less affected than they. La Roche arose. "Father of mercies!" said he, "forgive these tears; assist Thy servant to lift up his soul to Thee; to lift to Thee the souls of Thy people! My friends! it is good so to do: at all seasons it is good, but in the days of our distress what a privilege it is! Well saith the sacred book, 'Trust in the Lord; at all times trust in the Lord.' When every other support fails us, when the fountains of worldly comfort are dried up, let us then seek those living waters which flow from the throne of God. 'Tis only from the belief of the goodness and wisdom of a Supreme Being that our calamities can be borne in that manner which becomes a man. Human wisdom is here of little use; for, in proportion as it bestows comfort, it represses feeling, without which we may cease to be hurt by calamity, but we shall also cease to enjoy happiness. I will not bid you be insensible, my friends! I cannot, I cannot, if I would (his tears flowed afresh)—I feel too much myself, and I am not ashamed of my feelings; but therefore may I the more willingly be heard; therefore have I prayed God to give me strength to speak to you; to direct you to Him, not with empty words, but with these tears; not from speculation, but from experience—that while you see me suffer, you may know also my consolation.

"You behold the mourner of his only child, the last earthly stay and blessing of his declining years! Such a child too! It becomes not me to speak of her virtues; yet it is but gratitude to mention them, because they were exerted towards myself. Not many days ago you saw her young, beautiful, virtuous, and happy: ye who are parents will judge of my felicity then—ye will judge of my affliction now. But I look towards Him who struck me; I see the hand of a father amidst the chastenings of my God. Oh! could I make you feel what it is to pour out the heart when it is pressed down with many sorrows, to pour it out with confidence to Him in whose hands are life and death, on whose power awaits all that the first enjoys, and in contemplation of whom disappears all that the last can inflict! For we are not as those who die without hope; we know that our Redeemer liveth—that we shall live with Him, with our friends His servants, in that blessed land where sorrow is unknown, and happiness is endless as it is perfect.

Go then, mourn not for me ; I have not lost my child : but a little while, and we shall meet again, never to be separated. But ye are also my children : would ye that I should not grieve without comfort ? So live as she lived ; that, when your death cometh, it may be the death of the righteous, and your latter end like hers. ”

Such was the exhortation of La Roche ; his audience answered it with their tears. The good old man had dried up his at the altar of the Lord ; his countenance had lost its sadness, and assumed the glow of faith and of hope ; Mr. — followed him into his house. The inspiration of the pulpit was past ; at sight of him the scenes they had last met in rushed again on his mind. La Roche threw his arms round his neck, and watered it with his tears. The other was equally affected ; they went together, in silence, into the parlour where the evening service was wont to be performed. The curtains of the organ were open ; La Roche started back at the sight. “ Oh ! my friend ! ” said he, and his tears burst forth again. Mr. — had now recollected himself ; he stepped forward, and drew the curtains close—the old man wiped off his tears, and taking his friend’s hand,

“ You see my weakness,” said he ; “ ’tis the weakness of humanity ; but my comfort is not therefore lost.”

“ I heard you,” said the other, “ in the pulpit , I rejoice that such consolation is yours.”

“ It is, my friend.” said he, “ and I trust I shall ever hold it fast. If there are any who doubt our faith, let them think of what importance religion is to calamity, and forbear to weaken its force ; if they cannot restore our happiness, let them not take away the solace of our affliction.”

Mr. —’s heart was smitten ; and I have heard him, long after, confess that there were moments when the remembrance overcame him even to weakness ; when, amidst all the pleasures of philosophical discovery, and the pride of literary fame, he recalled to his mind the venerable figure of the good La Roche, and wished that he had never doubted.

SIR JOHN MALCOLM
1769-1838

SADIK BEG

SADIK BEG was of good family, handsome in person, and possessed of both sense and courage, but he was poor, having no property but his sword and his horse, with which he served as a gentleman retainer of a nabob. The latter, satisfied of the purity of Sadik's descent, and entertaining a respect for his character, determined to make him the husband of his daughter Hooseinee, who, though beautiful, as her name implied, was remarkable for her haughty manner and ungovernable temper.

Giving a husband of the condition of Sadik Beg to a lady of Hooseinee's rank, was, according to usage in such unequal matches, like giving her a slave, and as she heard a good report of his personal qualities, she offered no objections to the marriage, which was celebrated soon after it was proposed, and apartments were assigned to the happy couple in the nabob's palace.

Some of Sadik Beg's friends rejoiced in his good fortune, as they saw, in the connection he had formed, a sure prospect of his advancement. Others mourned the fate of so fine and promising a young man, now condemned to bear through life all the humours of a proud and capricious woman ; but one of his friends, a little man called Merdek, who was completely henpecked, was particularly rejoiced, and quite chuckled at the thought of seeing another in the same condition with himself. About a month after the nuptials, Merdek met his friend, and, with malicious pleasure, wished him joy of his marriage.

"Most sincerely do I congratulate you, Sadik," said he, "on this happy event."

"Thank you, my good fellow, I am very happy indeed, and rendered more so by the joy I perceive it gives my friends."

"Do you really mean to say you are happy ? " said Merdek, with a smile.

"I really am so," replied Sadik.

"Nonsense ! " said his friend ; "do we not all know to what a termagant you are united ? and her temper and high rank combined must no doubt make her a sweet companion."

Here he burst into a loud laugh, and the little man actually strutted with a feeling of superiority over the bridegroom.

Sadik, who knew his situation and feelings, was amused instead of being angry. "My friend," said he, "I quite understand the grounds of your apprehension for my happiness. Before I was married I had heard the same reports as you have done of my beloved bride's disposition; but, I am happy to say, I have found it quite otherwise; she is a most docile and obedient wife."

"But how has this miraculous change been wrought?"

"Why," said Sadik, "I believe I have some merit in effecting it, but you shall hear."

"After the ceremonies of our nuptials were over, I went, in my military dress, and with my sword by my side, to the apartment of Hooseinee. She was sitting in a most dignified posture to receive me, and her looks were anything but inviting. As I entered the room a beautiful cat, evidently a great favourite, came purring up to me. I deliberately drew my sword, struck its head off, and taking that in one hand and the body in the other, threw them out of the window. I then very unconcernedly turned to the lady, who appeared in some alarm; she, however, made no observations, but was in every way kind and submissive, and has continued so ever since."

"Thank you, my dear fellow," said little Merdek, with a significant shake of the head—"a word to the wise"; and away he capered, obviously quite rejoiced.

It was near evening when this conversation took place; soon after, when the dark cloak of night had enveloped the bright radiance of day, Merdek entered the chamber of his spouse, with something of a martial swagger, armed with a scimitar. The unsuspecting cat came forward, as usual, to welcome the husband of her mistress, but in an instant her head was divided from her body by a blow from the hand which had so often caressed her. Merdek, having proceeded so far courageously, stooped to take up the dissevered members of the cat, but before he could effect this, a blow upon the side of the head from his incensed lady laid him sprawling on the floor.

The tattle and scandal of the day spreads from zenaneh to zenaneh with surprising rapidity, and the wife of Merdek saw in a moment whose example it was that he imitated.

"Take that," said she, as she gave him another cuff, "take that, you paltry wretch. You should," she added, laughing him to scorn, "have killed the cat on the wedding-day."

SIR WALTER SCOTT
1771-1832

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE

"**H**ONEST folks like me! How do ye ken whether I am honest, or what I am? I may be the deevil himsell for what ye ken, for he has power to come disguised like an angel of light; and, besides, he is a prime fiddler. He played a sonata to Corelli, ye ken."

There was something odd in this speech, and the tone in which it was said. It seemed as if my companion was not always in his constant mind, or that he was willing to try if he could frighten me. I laughed at the extravagance of his language, however, and asked him in reply if he was fool enough to believe that the foul fiend would play so silly a masquerade.

"Ye ken little about it—little about it," said the old man, shaking his head and beard, and knitting his brows. "I could tell ye something about that."

What his wife mentioned of his being a tale-teller as well as a musician now occurred to me; and as, you know, I like tales of superstition, I begged to have a specimen of his talent as we went along.

"It is very true," said the blind man, "that when I am tired of scraping thairm or singing ballants I whiles make a tale serve the turn among the country bodies; and I have some fearsome anes, that make the auld carlines shake on the settle, and the bits 'o bairns skirl on their minnies out frae their beds. But this that I am going to tell you was a thing that befell in our ain house in my father's time—that is, my father was then a hafflins callant; and I tell it to you, that it may be a lesson to you, that are but a young thoughtless chap, wha ye draw up wi' on a lonely road; for muckle was the dool and care that came o' 't to my gudesire."

He commenced his tale accordingly, in a distinct narrative tone of voice, which he raised and depressed with considerable skill—at times sinking almost into a whisper, and turning his clear but sightless eyeballs upon my face, as if it had been possible for him to witness the

impression which his narrative made upon my features. I will not spare a syllable of it, although it be of the longest ; so I make a dash—and begin :

Ye maun have heard of Sir Robert Redgauntlet of that Ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years. The country will lang mind him ; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi' the Hielandmen in Montrose's time ; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the saxteen hundred and fifty-twa ; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic favour as the laird of Redgauntlet ? He was knighted at Lonon Court, wi' the king's ain sword ; and being a red-hot prelatist, he came down here, rampaung like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy (and of lunacy, for what I ken), to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it ; for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was aye for the strong hand ; and his name is kenn'd as wide in the country as Claverhouse's or Tam Dalyell's. Glen, nor dargle, nor mountain, nor cave could hide the puir hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And, troth, when they fand them, they didna make muckle mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roebuck. It was just, " Will ye tak' the test ? " If not, " Make ready—present—fire ! " and there lay the recusant.

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan ; that he was proof against steel and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hailstones from a hearth ; that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra-gauns ;¹ and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared on him was, " Deil scowp wi' Redgauntlet ! " He wasna a bad master to his ain folk, though, and was weel aneugh liked by his tenants ; and as for the lackeys and troopers that rade out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs' ca'd those killing-times, they wad hae drunken themsells blind to his health at ony time.

Now you are to ken that my gudesire lived on Redgauntlet's grund—they ca' the place Primrose Knowe. We had lived on the grund, and under the Redgauntlets, since the riding-days, and lang before.

¹ A precipitous side of a mountain in Moffatdale.

It was a pleasant bit ; and I think the air is callerer and fresher there than onywhere else in the country. It's a' deserted now ; and I sat on the broken door-cheek three days since, and was glad I couldna see the plight the place was in—but that's a' wide o' the mark. There dwelt my gudesire, Steenie Steenson ; a rambling, rattling chiel' he had been in his young days, and could play weel on the pipes ; he was famous at "hoopers and girders," a' Cumberland couldna touch him at "Jockie Lattin," and he had the finest finger for the back-lilt between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites, just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belang to some side or other. He had nae ill-will to the Whig bodies, and liked little to see the blude rin, though, being obliged to follow Sir Robert in hunting and hoisting, watching and warding, he saw muckle mischief, and maybe did some that he couldna avoid.

Now Steenie was a kind of favourite with his master, and kenn'd a' the folk about the castle, and was often sent for to play the pipes when they were at their merriment. Auld Dougal MacCallum, the butler, that had followed Sir Robert through gude and ill, thick and thin, pool and stream, was specially fond of the pipes, and aye gae my gudesire his gude wurd wi' the laird ; for Dougal could turn his master round his finger.

Weel, round came the Revolution, and it had like to hae broken the hearts baith of Dougal and his master. But the change was not a'thegither sae great as they feared and other folk thought for. The Whigs made an unco crawling what they wad do with their auld enemies, and in special wi' Sir Robert Redgauntlet. But there were ower mony great folks dipped in the same doings to make a spick-and-span new world. So Parliament passed it a' ower easy ; and Sir Robert, bating that he was held to hunting foxes instead of Covenanters, remained just the man he was. His revel was as loud, and his hall as weel lighted, as ever it had been, though maybe he lacked the fines of the Nonconformists, that used to come to stock his larder and cellar ; for it is certain he began to be keener about the rents than his tenants used to find him before, and they behooved to be prompt to the rent-day, or else the laird wasna pleased. And he was sic an awsome body that naebody cared to anger him ; for the oaths he swore, and the rage that he used to get into, and the looks that he put on made men sometimes think him a devil incarnate.

Weel, my gudesire was nae manager—no that he was a very great misguider—but he hadna the saving gift, and he got twa terms' rent in arrear. He got the first brash at Whitsunday put ower wi' fair word and piping; but when Martinmas came there was a summons from the grund officer to come wi' the rent on a day preceese, or else Steenie behooved to flit. Sair wark he had to get the siller; but he was weel freended, and at last he got the haill scraped thegither—a thousand merks. The maist of it was from a neighbour they ca'd Laurie Lapraik—a sly tod. Laurie had wealth o' gear, could hunt wi' the hound and rin wi' the hare, and be Whig or Tory, saunt or sinner, as the wind stood. He was a professor in this Revolution warld, but he liked an orra sough of this warld, and a tune on the pipes, weel aneugh at a by-time; and, abune a', he thought he had gude security for the siller he lent my gudesire ower the stocking at Primrose Knowe.

Away trots my gudesire to Redgauntlet Castle wi' a heavy purse and a light heart, glad to be out of the laird's danger. Weel, the first thing he learned at the castle was that Sir Robert had fretted himsell into a fit of the gout because he did not appear before twelve o'clock. It wasna a'thegither for sake of the money, Dougal thought, but because he didna like to part wi' my gudesire aff the grund. Dougal was glad to see Steenie, and brought him into the great oak parlour; and there sat the laird his leesome lane, excepting that he had beside him a great, ill-favoured jackanape that was a special pet of his. A cankered beast it was, and mony an ill-natured trick it played; ill to please it was, and easily angered—ran about the haill castle, chattering and yowling, and pinching and biting folk, specially before ill weather, or disturbance in the state. Sir Robert ca'd it Major Weir, after the warlock that was burnt; and few folk liked either the name or the conditions of the creature—they thought there was something in it by ordinar—and my gudesire was not just easy in mind when the door shut on him, and he saw himsell in the room wi' naebody but the laird, Dougal MacCallum, and the major—a thing that hadna chanced to him before.

Sir Robert sat, or, I should say, lay, in a great arm-chair, wi' his grand velvet gown, and his feet on a cradle; for he had baith gout and gravel, and his face looked as gash and ghastly as Satan's. Major Weir sat opposite to him, in a red-laced coat, and the laird's wig on his head; and aye as Sir Robert girmed wi' pain, the jackanape girmed too, like a sheep's head between a pair of tangs—an ill-faur'd, fearsome

couple they were. The laird's buff-coat was hung on a pin behind him, and his broadsword and his pistols within reach ; for he kept it up the auld fashion of having the weapons ready ; and a horse saddled day and night, just as he used to do when he was able to loup on horse-back, and sway after ony of the hill-folk he could get speerings of. Some said it was for fear of the Whigs taking vengeance, but I judge it was just his auld custom—he wasna gien to fear onything. The rental-book, wi' its black cover and brass clasps, was lying beside him ; and a book of sculduddery sangs was put betwixt the leaves, to keep it open at the place where it bore evidence against the goodman of Primrose Knowe, as behind the hand with his mails and duties. Sir Robert gave my gudesire a look, as if he would have withered his heart in his bosom. Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows that men saw the visible mark of a horse-shoe in his forehead, deep-tinted, as if it had been stamped there.

“ Are ye come light-handed, ye son of a toom whistle ? ” said Sir Robert. “ Zounds ! if you are—— ”

My gudesire, with as gude a countenance as he could put on, made a leg, and placed the bag of money on the table wi' a dash, like a man that does something clever. The laird drew it to him hastily. “ Is it all here, Steenie, man ? ”

“ Your honour will find it right,” said my gudesire.

“ Here, Dougal,” said the laird, “ gie Steenie a tass of brandy till I count the siller and write the receipt.”

But they werena weel out of the room when Sir Robert gied a yelloch that garr'd the castle rock. Back ran Dougal ; in flew the liverymen ; yell on yell gied the laird, ilk ane mair awfu' than the ither. My gudesire knew not whether to stand or flee, but he ventured back into the parlour, where a' was gaun hirdie-girdie—naebody to say “ come in ” or “ gae out.” Terribly the laird roared for cauld water to his feet, and wine to cool his throat ; and “ Hell, hell, hell, and its flames,” was aye the word in his mouth. They brought him water, and when they plunged his swoln feet into the tub, he cried out it was burning ; and folks say that it *did* bubble and sparkle like a seething cauldron. He flung the cup at Dougal's head and said he had given him blood instead of Burgundy ; and, sure aneugh, the lass washed clotted blood aff the carpet the neist day. The jackanape they ca'd Major Weir, it jibbered and cried as if it was mocking its master. My gudesire's head was like to turn ; he forgot baith siller and receipt,

and downstairs he banged ; but, as he ran, the shrieks came fainter and fainter ; there was a deep-drawn shivering groan, and word gaed through the castle that the laird was dead.

Weel, away came my gudesire wi' his finger in his mouth, and his best hope was that Dougal had seen the money-bag and heard the laird speak of writing the receipt. The young laird, now Sir John, came from Edinburgh to see things put to rights. Sir John and his father never 'greed weel. Sir John had been bred an advocate, and afterward sat in the last Scots Parliament and voted for the Union, having gotten, it was thought, a rug of the compensations—if his father could have come out of his grave he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane. Some thought it was easier counting with the auld rough knight than the fair-spoken young ane—but mair of that anon.

Dougal MacCallum, poor body, neither grat nor graned, but gaed about the house looking like a corpse, but directing, as was his duty, a' the order of the grand funeral. Now Dougal looked aye waur and waur when night was coming, and was aye the last to gang to his bed, whilk was in a little round just opposite the chamber of dais, whilk his master occupied while he was living, and where he now lay in state, as they ca'd it, weeladay ! The night before the funeral Dougal could keep his awn counsel nae longer ; he came down wi' his proud spirit, and fairly asked auld Hutcheon to sit in his room with him for an hour. When they were in the round, Dougal took a tass of brandy to himsell, and gave another to Hutcheon, and wished him all health and lang life, and said that, for himsell, he wasna lang for this world ; for that every night since Sir Robert's death his silver call had sounded from the state chamber just as it used to do at nights in his lifetime to call Dougal to help to turn him in his bed. Dougal said that, being alone with the dead on that floor of the tower (for naebody cared to wake Sir Robert Redgauntlet like another corpse), he had never daured to answer the call, but that now his conscience checked him for neglecting his duty ; for, " though death breaks service," said MacCallum, " it shall never weak my service to Sir Robert ; and I will answer his next whistle, so be you will stand by me, Hutcheon."

Hutcheon had nae will to the wark, but he had stood by Dougal in battle and broil, and he wad not fail him at this pinch ; so down the carles sat ower a stoup of brandy, and Hutcheon, who was something of a clerk, would have read a chapter of the Bible ; but Dougal would

hear naething but a blaud of Davie Lindsay, whilk was the waur preparation.

When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure enough the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert was blowing it ; and up got the twa auld serving-men, and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance ; for there were torches in the room which showed him the foul fiend, in his ain shape, sitting on the laird's coffin ! Ower he couped as if he had been dead. He could not tell how lang he lay in a trance at the door, but when he gathered himsell he cried on his neighbour, and getting nae answer raised the house, when Dougal was found lying dead within twa steps of the bed where his master's coffin was placed. As for the whistle, it was gane anes and aye ; but mony a time was it heard at the top of the house on the bartisan, and amang the auld chimneys and turrets where the howlets have their nests. Sir John hushed the matter up, and the funeral passed over without mair bogie wark.

But when a' was ower, and the laird was beginning to settle his affairs, every tenant was called up for his arrears, and my gudesire for the full sum that stood against him in the rental-book. Weel, away he trots to the castle to tell his story, and there he is introduced to Sir John, sitting in his father's chair, in deep mourning, with weepers and hanging cravat, and a small walking-rapier by his side instead of the auld broadsword that had a hundredweight of steel about it, what with blade, chape, and basket-hilt. I have heard their communings so often tauld ower that I almost think I was there mysell, though I couldna be born at the time. [In fact, Alan, my companion, mimicked, with a good deal of humour, the flattering, conciliating tone of the tenant's address and the hypocritical melancholy of the laird's reply. His grandfather, he said, had, while he spoke, his eye fixed on the rental-book as if it were a mastiff-dog that he was afraid would spring up and bite him.]

" I wuss ye joy, sir, of the head seat and the white loaf and the braid lairdship. Your father was a kind man to freends and followers ; muckle grace to you, Sir John, to fill his shoon—his boots, I suld say, for he seldom wore shoon, unless it were muils when he had the gout."

" Ay, Steenie," quoth the laird, sighing deeply, and putting his napkin to his een, " his was a sudden call, and he will be missed in the country ; no time to set his house in order—weel prepared Godward,

no doubt, which is the root of the matter ; but he left us behind a tangled hesp to wind, Steenie. Hem ! hem ! We maun go to business, Steenie ; much to do, and little time to do it in."

Here he opened the fatal volume. I have heard of a thing they call Doomsday-book—I am clear it has been a rental of back-ganging tenants.

"Stephen," said Sir John, still in the same soft, sleekit tone of voice—"Stephen Stevenson, or Steenson, ye are down here for a year's rent behind the hand—due at last term."

Stephen. Please your honour, Sir John, I paid it to your father.

Sir John. Ye took a receipt then, doubtless, Stephen, and can produce it ?

Stephen. Indeed, I hadna time, and it like your honour ; for nae sooner had I set down the siller, and just as his honour, Sir Robert, that's gaen, drew it till him to count it and write out the receipt, he was ta'en wi' the pains that removed him.

"That was unlucky," said Sir John after a pause. "But ye maybe paid it in the presence of somebody. I want but a *talis qualis* evidence, Stephen. I would go ower strictly to work with no poor man."

Stephen. Troth, Sir John, there was naebody in the room but Dougal MacCallum, the butler. But, as your honour kens, he has e'en followed his auld master.

"Very unlucky again, Stephen," said Sir John, without altering his voice a single note. "The man to whom ye paid the money is dead, and the man who witnessed the payment is dead too ; and the siller, which should have been to the fore, is neither seen nor heard tell of in the repositories. How am I to believe a' this ?"

Stephen. I dinna ken, your honour ; but there is a bit memorandum note of the very coins, for, God help me ! I had to borrow out of twenty purses ; and I am sure that ilka man there set down will take his grit oath for what purpose I borrowed the money.

Sir John. I have little doubt ye *borrowed* the money, Steenie. It is the *payment* that I want to have proof of.

Stephen. The siller maun be about the house, Sir John. And since your honour never got it, and his honour that was canna have ta'en it wi' him, maybe some of the family may hae seen it.

Sir John. We will examine the servants, Stephen ; that is but reasonable.

But lackey and lass, and page and groom, all denied stoutly that

they had even seen such a bag of money as my gudesire described. What was waur, he had unluckily not mentioned to any living soul of them his purpose of paying his rent. Ae quean had noticed something under his arm, but she took it for the pipes.

Sir John Redgauntlet ordered the servants out of the room and then said to my gudesire, "Now, Steenie, ye see ye have fair play; and, as I have little doubt ye ken better where to find the siller than ony other body, I beg in fair terms, and for your own sake, that you will end this fasherie; for, Stephen, ye maun pay or flit."

"The Lord forgie your opinions," said Stephen, driven almost to his wit's end; "I am an honest man."

"So am I, Stephen," said his honour; "and so are all the folks in this house, I hope. But if there be a knave among us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove." He paused, and then added, mair sternly: "If I understand your trick, sir, you want to take advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family, and particularly respecting my father's sudden death, thereby to cheat me out of the money, and perhaps take away my character by insinuating that I have received the rent I am demanding. Where do you suppose this money to be? I insist upon knowing."

My gudesire saw everything look sae muckle against him that he grew nearly desperate. However, he shifted from one foot to another, looked to every corner of the room, and made no answer.

"Speak out, sirrah," said the laird, assuming a look of his father's, a very particular ane, which he had when he was angry—it seemed as if the wrinkles of his frown made that selfsame fearful shape of a horse's shoe in the middle of his brow; "speak out, sir! I *will* know your thoughts; do you suppose that I have this money?"

"Far be it frae me to say so," said Stephen.

"Do you charge any of my people with having taken it?"

"I wad be laith to charge them that may be innocent," said my gudesire; "and if there be any one that is guilty, I have nae proof."

"Somewhere the money must be, if there is a word of truth in your story," said Sir John; "I ask where you think it is—and demand a correct answer!"

"In hell, if you *will* have my thoughts of it," said my gudesire, driven to extremity—"in hell! with your father, his jackanape, and his silver whistle."

Down the stairs he ran (for the parlour was nae place for him after

such a word), and he heard the laird swearing blood and wounds behind him as fast as ever did Sir Robert, and roaring for the bailie and the baron-officer.

Away rode my gudesire to his chief creditor (him they ca'd Laurie Lapraik), to try if he could make onything out of him; but when he tauld his story, he got but the worst word in his wame—thief, beggar, and dyvour were the saftest terms; and to the boot of these hard terms Laurie brought up the auld story of dipping his hand in the blood of God's saunts, just as if a tenant could have helped riding with the laird, and that a laird like Sir Robert Redgauntlet. My gudesire was, by this time, far beyond the bounds of patience, and, while he and Laurie were at deil speed the liars, he was wanchancie aneugh to abuse Lapraik's doctrine as weel as the man, and said things that garr'd folks' flesh grue that heard them—he wasna just himsell, and he had lived wi' a wild set in his day.

At last they parted, and my gudesire was to ride hame through the wood of Pitmurkie, that is a' fou of black firs, as they say. I ken the wood, but the firs may be black or white for what I can tell. At the entry of the wood there is a wild common, and on the edge of the common a little lonely change-house that was keepit then by a hostler wife—they suld hae ca'd her Tibbie Faw—and there puir Steenie cried for a mutchkin of brandy, for he had had no refreshment the haill day. Tibbie was earnest wi' him to take a bite of meat, but he couldna think o' 't, nor would he take his foot out of the stirrup, and took off the brandy wholly at twa draughts, and named a toast at each. The first was, the memory of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, and may he never lie quiet in his grave till he had righted his poor bond-tenant; and the second was, a health to Man's Enemy, if he would but get him back the pock of siller or tell him what came o' 't, for he saw the haill world was like to regard him as a thief and a cheat, and he took that waur than even the ruin of his house and hauld.

On he rode, little caring where. It was a dark night turned, and the trees made it yet darker, and he let the beast take its ain road through the wood; when all of a sudden, from tired and wearied that it was before, the nag began to spring and flee and stend, that my gudesire could hardly keep the saddle. Upon the whilk, a horseman, suddenly riding up beside him, said, "That's a mettle beast of yours, freend; will you sell him?" So saying, he touched the horse's neck with his riding-wand, and it fell into its auld heigh-ho of a stumbling

trot. "But his spunk's soon out of him, I think," continued the stranger, "and that is like mony a man's courage, that thinks he wad do great things."

My gudesire scarce listened to this, but spurred his horse, with, "Gude-e'en to you, freend."

But it's like the stranger was ane that doesna lightly yield his point; for, ride as Steenie liked, he was aye beside him at the self-same pace. At last my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, grew half angry and, to say the truth, half feard.

"What is it that you want with me, freend?" he said. "If ye be a robber, I have nae money; if ye be a leal man, wanting company, I have nae heart to mirth or speaking; and if ye want to ken the road, I scarce ken it mysell."

"If you will tell me your grief," said the stranger, "I am one that, though I have been sair misca'd in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends."

So my gudesire, to ease his ain heart mair than from any hope of help, told him the story from beginning to end.

"It's a hard pinch," said the stranger; "but I think I can help you."

"If you could lend the money, sir, and take a lang day—I ken nae other help on earth," said my gudesire.

"But there may be some under the earth," said the stranger. "Come, I'll be frank wi' you; I could lend you the money on bond, but you would maybe scruple my terms. Now I can tell you that your auld laird is disturbed in his grave by your curses and the wailing of your family, and if ye daur venture to go to see him he will give you the receipt."

My gudesire's hair stood on end at this proposal, but he thought his companion might be some humoursome chield that was trying to frighten him, and might end with lending him the money. Besides, he was bauld wi' brandy and desperate wi' distress; and he said he had courage to go to the gate of hell, and a step farther, for that receipt. The stranger laughed.

Weel, they rode on through the thickest of the wood, when, all of a sudden, the horse stopped at the door of a great house; and, but that he knew the place was ten miles off, my father would have thought he was at Redgauntlet Castle. They rode into the outer courtyard, through the muckle faulding yetts, and aneath the auld portcullis;

and the whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be at Sir Robert's house at Pace and Yule, and such high seasons. They lap off, and my gudesire, as seemed to him, fastened his horse to the very ring he had tied him to that morning when he gaed to wait on the young Sir John.

"God!" said my gudesire, "if Sir Robert's death be but a dream!"

He knocked at the ha' door just as he was wont, and his auld acquaintance, Dougal MacCallum—just after his wont, too—came to open the door, and said, "Piper Stecnie, are ye there, lad? Sir Robert has been crying for you."

My gudesire was like a man in a dream; he looked for the stranger, but he was gane for the time. At last he just tried to say, "Ha! Dougal Driveower, are you living? I thought ye had been dead."

"Never fash yoursell wi' me," said Dougal, "but look to yoursell; and see ye tak' naething frae onybody here, neither meat, drink, or siller, except the receipt that is your ain."

So saying, he led the way out through halls and trances that were weel kenn'd to my gudesire, and into the auld oak parlour; and there was as much singing of profane sangs, and birling of red wine, and blasphemy and sculduddery as had ever been in Redgauntlet Castle when it was at the blythest.

But Lord take us in keeping! what a set of ghastly revellers there were that sat around that table! My gudesire kenn'd mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was the fierce Middleton, and the dissolute Rothes, and the crafty Lauderdale; and Dalyell, with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall, with Cameron's blude on his hand; and wild Bonshaw, that tied blessed Mr. Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dumbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy Advocate MacKenzie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom, had been to the rest as a god. And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark curled locks streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and with his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance; while the rest hallooed and sang and laughed, that the room rang. But their smiles were fearfully contorted from time to time;

and their laughter passed into such wild sounds as made my gudesire's very nails grow blue, and chilled the marrow in his banes.

They that waited at the table were just the wicked serving-men and troopers that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth. There was the Lang Lad of the Nethertown, that helped to take Argyle; and the bishop's summoner, that they called the Deil's Rattlebag; and the wicked guardsmen in their laced coats; and the savage Highland Amorites, that shed blood like water; and mony a proud serving-man, haughty of heart and bloody of hand, cringing to the rich and making them wickeder than they would be, grinding the poor to powder when the rich had broken them to fragments. And mony, mony mair were coming and ganging, a' as busy in their vocation as if they had been alive.

Sir Robert Redgauntlet, in the midst of a' this fearful riot, cried, wi' a voice like thunder, on Steenie Piper to come to the board-head where he was sitting, his legs stretched out before him and swathed up with flannel, with his holster pistols aside him, while the great broadsword rested against his chair, just as my gudesire had seen him the last time upon earth; the very cushion for the jackanape was close to him, but the creature itself was not there—it wasna its hour, it's likely; for he heard them say, as he came forward, "Is not the major come yet?" And another answered, "The jackanape will be here betimes the morn." And when my gudesire came forward, Sir Robert, or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness, said, "Weel, piper, hae ye settled wi' my son for the year's rent?"

With much ado my father gat breath to say that Sir John would not settle without his honour's receipt.

"Ye shall hae that for a tune of the pipes, Steenie," said the appearance of Sir Robert; "play us up 'Weel Hoddled, Luckie.'"

Now this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a warlock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings; and my gudesire had sometimes played it at the ranting suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi' him.

"MacCallum, ye limb of Beelzebub," said the fearfu' Sir Robert, "bring Steenie the pipes that I am keeping for him!"

MacCallum brought a pair of pipes might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles. But he gave my gudesire a nudge as he offered them; and looking secretly and closely, Steenie saw that the chanter

was of steel, and heated to a white heat ; so he had fair warning not to trust his fingers with it. So he excused himself again, and said he was faint and frightened, and had not wind aneugh to fill the bag.

"Then ye maun eat and drink, Steenie," said the figure, "for we do little else here, and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting."

Now these were the very words that the bloody Earl of Douglas said to keep the king's messenger in hand while he cut the head off MacLellan of Bombie, at the Threave Castle ; and that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat nor drink nor make minstrelsy, but simply for his ain—to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it ; and he was so stout-hearted by this time that he charged Sir Robert for conscience' sake (he had no power to say the holy name), and as he hoped for peace and rest, to spread no snares for him, but just to give him his ain.

The appearance gnashed its teeth and laughed, but it took from a large pocket-book the receipt, and handed it to Steenie. "There is your receipt, ye pitiful cur ; and for the money, my dog-whelp of a son may go look for it in the Cat's Cradle."

My gudesire uttered mony thanks, and was about to retire, when Sir Robert roared aloud : "Stop, though, thou sack-doudling son of a —— ! I am not done with thee. HERE we do nothing for nothing ; and you must return on this very day twelvemonth to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection."

My father's tongue was loosed of a suddenty, and he said aloud, "I refer myself to God's pleasure, and not to yours."

He had no sooner uttered the word than all was dark around him ; and he sank on the earth with such a sudden shock that he lost both breath and sense.

How lang Steenie lay there he could not tell ; but when he came to himself he was lying in the auld kirkyard of Redgauntlet parochine, just at the door of the family aisle, and the scutcheon of the auld knight, Sir Robert, hanging over his head. There was a deep morning fog on grass and gravestone around him, and his horse was feeding quietly beside the minister's twa cows. Steenie would have thought the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand fairly written and signed by the auld laird ; only the last letters of his name were a little disorderly, written like one seized with sudden pain.

Sorely troubled in his mind, he left that dreary place, rode through

the mist to Redgauntlet Castle, and with much ado he got speech of the laird.

"Well, you dyvour bankrupt," was the first word, "have you brought me my rent?"

"No," answered my gudesire, "I have not; but I have brought your honour Sir Robert's receipt for it."

"How, sirrah? Sir Robert's receipt! You told me he had not given you one."

"Will your honour please to see if that bit line is right?"

Sir John looked at every line, and at every letter, with much attention; and at last at the date, which my gudesire had not observed—"From my appointed place," he read, "this twenty-fifth of November."

"What! That is yesterday! Villain, thou must have gone to hell for this!"

"I got it from your honour's father; whether he be in heaven or hell, I know not," said Steenie.

"I will debate you for a warlock to the Privy Council!" said Sir John. "I will send you to your master, the devil, with the help of a tar-barrel and a torch!"

"I intend to debate mysell to the Presbytery," said Steenie, "and tell them all I have seen last night, whilk are things fitter for them to judge of than a borrel man like me."

Sir John paused, composed himsell, and desired to hear the full history; and my gudesire told it him from point to point, as I have told it you—neither more nor less.

Sir John was silent again for a long time, and at last he said, very composedly: "Steenie, this story of yours concerns the honour of many a noble family besides mine; and if it be a leasing-making, to keep yourself out of my danger, the least you can expect is to have a red-hot iron driven through your tongue, and that will be as bad as scauding your fingers wi' a red-hot chanter. But yet it may be true, Steenie, and if the money cast up I shall not know what to think of it. But where shall we find the Cat's Cradle? There are cats enough about the old house, but I think they kitten without the ceremony of bed or cradle."

"We were best ask Hutcheon," said my gudesire; "he kens a' the odd corners about as weel as—another serving-man that is now gane, and that I wad not like to name."

Aweel, Hutcheon, when he was asked, told them that a ruinous turret lang disused, next to the clock-house, only accessible by a ladder, for the opening was on the outside, above the battlements, was called of old the Cat's Cradle.

"There will I go immediately," said Sir John; and he took—with what purpose Heaven kens—one of his father's pistols from the hall-table, where they had lain since the night he died, and hastened to the battlements.

It was a dangerous place to climb, for the ladder was auld and frail, and wanted ane or twa rounds. However, up got Sir John, and entered at the turret door, where his body stopped the only little light that was in the bit turret. Something flees at him wi' a vengeance, maist dang him back ower—bang! gaed the knight's pistol, and Hutcheon, that held the ladder, and my gudesire, that stood beside him, hears a loud skelloch. A minute after, Sir John flings the body of the jackanape down to them, and cries that the siller is fund and that they should come up and help him. And there was the bag of siller sure aneugh, and mony orra thing besides that had been missing for mony a day. And Sir John, when he had ripped the turret weel, led my gudesire into the dining-parlour, and took him by the hand, and spoke kindly to him, and said he was sorry he should have doubted his word, and that he would hereafter be a good master to him, to make amends.

"And now, Steenie," said Sir John, "although this vision of yours tends, on the whole, to my father's credit as an honest man, that he should, even after his death, desire to see justice done to a poor man like you, yet you are sensible that ill-dispositioned men might make bad constructions upon it concerning his soul's health. So, I think, we had better lay the haill dirdum on that ill-deedie creature, Major Weir, and say naething about your dream in the wood of Pitmurkie. You had ta'en ower muckle brandy to be very certain about onything; and, Steenie, this receipt"—his hand shook while he held it out—"it's but a queer kind of document, and we will do best, I think, to put it quietly in the fire."

"Od, but for as queer as it is, it's a' the voucher I have for my rent," said my gudesire, who was afraid, it may be, of losing the benefit of Sir Robert's discharge.

"I will bear the contents to your credit in the rental-book, and give you a discharge under my own hand," said Sir John, "and that on

the spot. And, Steenie, if you can hold your tongue about this matter, you shall sit, from this time downward, at an easier rent."

"Mony thanks to your honour," said Steenie, who saw easily in what corner the wind was; "doubtless I will be conformable to all your honour's commands; only I would willingly speak wi' some powerful minister on the subject, for I do not like the sort of soumons of appointment whilk your honour's father——"

"Do not call the phantom my father!" said Sir John, interrupting him.

"Well, then, the thing that was so like him," said my gudesire; "he spoke of my coming back to see him this time twelvemonth, and it's a weight on my conscience."

"Aweel, then," said Sir John, "if you be so much distressed in mind, you may speak to our minister of the parish; he is a douce man, regards the honour of our family, and the mair that he may look for some patronage from me."

Wi' that, my father readily agreed that the receipt should be burned; and the laird threw it into the chimney with his ain hand. Burn it would not for them, though; but away it flew up the lum, wi' a lang train of sparks at its tail, and a hissing noise like a squib.

My gudesire gaed down to the manse, and the minister, when he had heard the story, said it was his real opinion that, though my gudesire had gaen very far in tampering with dangerous matters, yet as he had refused the devil's arles (for such was the offer of meat and drink), and had refused to do homage by piping at his bidding, he hoped that, if he held a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan could take little advantage by what was come and gane. And, indeed, my gudesire, of his ain accord, lang forswore baith the pipes and the brandy—it was not even till the year was out, and the fatal day past, that he would so much as take the fiddle or drink usquebaugh or tippenny.

Sir John made up his story about the jackanape as he liked himsell; and some believe till this day there was no more in the matter than the filching nature of the brute. Indeed, ye'll no hinder some to threap that it was nane o' the auld Enemy that Dougal and Hutcheon saw in the laird's room, but only that wanchancie creature the major, capering on the coffin; and that, as to the blawing on the laird's whistle that was heard after he was dead, the filthy brute could do that as weel as the laird himsell, if not better. But Heaven kens the

truth, whilk first came out by the minister's wife, after Sir John and her ain gudeman were baith in the moulds. And then my gudesire, wha was failed in his limbs, but not in his judgment or memory—at least nothing to speak of—was obliged to tell the real narrative to his freends, for the credit of his good name. He might else have been charged for a warlock.

The shades of evening were growing thicker around us as my conductor finished his long narrative with this moral: "You see, birkie, it is nae chancy thing to tak' a stranger traveller for a guide when you are in an uncouth land."

"I should not have made that inference," said I. "Your grandfather's adventure was fortunate for himself, whom it saved from ruin and distress, and fortunate for his landlord."

"Ay, but they had baith to sup the sauce o' 't sooner or later," said Wandering Willie; "what was fristed wasna forgiven. Sir John died before he was much over threescore, and it was just like of a moment's illness. And for my gudesire, though he departed in fulness of life, yet there was my father, a yauld man of forty-five, fell down betwixt the stilts of his plough, and rase never again, and left nae bairn but me—a puir, sightless, fatherless, motherless creature, could neither work nor want. Things gaed well aneugh at first, for Sir Regwald Redgauntlet, the only son of Sir John and the oye of auld Sir Robert, and, wae's me! the last of the honourable house, took the farm aff our hands and brought me into his household to have care of me. My head never settled since I lost him; and if I say another word about it, deil a bar will I have the heart to play the night. Look out, my gentle chap," he resumed, in a different tone; "ye should see the lights at Brokenburn Glen by this time."

JAMES HOGG

1770-1885

A DREAM OF DEATH

NOT very long ago, one William Laidlaw, a sturdy Borderer, went on an excursion to a remote district in the Highlands of Scotland. He was a tall and very athletic man, remarkably active, and matchless at cudgel-playing, running, wrestling, and other exercises, for which the Borderers have been noted from time immemorial. To his other accomplishments he added an excellent temper, was full of good-humour, and a most capital bottle-companion.

Most of our modern travellers would have performed the greater part of the journey he undertook in a steam-boat, a stage-coach, or some such convenience ; but he preferred going on foot, without any companion excepting an old oaken cudgel, which had been handed down to him from several generations, and which, by way of fancy, had been christened " Knock-him-down."

With this trusty friend in his hand, and fifty pounds sterling in his pocket, he found himself, by the fourth day, in one of the most dismal glens of the Highlands. It was by this time nightfall, and both William's appetite and limbs told him it was high time to look about for a place of repose, having, since six in the morning, walked nearly fifty English miles.

Now, the question which employed his cogitations at this moment was, whether he should proceed, at the risk of losing his way among the bogs and morasses for which this district is famed, or remain till daybreak where he was ? Both expedients were unpleasant, and it is difficult to say which he would have adopted, when, about a mile to the left, a glimmering among the darkness attracted his notice.

It might have been a " Will-o'-wisp," or the light of some evil spirit at its midnight orgies ; but whatever the cause might be, it decided Mr. Laidlaw as to his further operations. He did not reflect a moment upon the matter, but exercising " Knock-him-down " in its usual capacity of walking assistant, he found himself in a few minutes alongside the spot from which the light proceeded. It was a Highland cottage, built after the usual fashion, partly of stone and

partly of turf ; but without examining too minutely the exterior of the building, he applied the stick to the door with such a degree of force as he conceived necessary to arouse the inmates.

"Wha's there ?" cried a shrill voice, like that of an old woman ; "what want ye at this hour of the night ?"

"I want lodging, honest woman, if such a thing is to be got."

"Na, na," replied the inmate, "you can get nae lodging here. Neither gentle nor simple shall enter my house this night. Gang on your ways, you're no aboon five miles frae the clachan of Ballacher."

"Five deevils !" exclaimed the Borderer ; "I tell you I have walked fifty miles already, and could as soon find out Johnny Groat's as the clachan."

"Walk fifty more, then," cried the obstinate portress ; "but here you downa enter, while I can keep you out."

"If you come to that, my woman," said William, "we shall soon settle the point. In plain language, if you do not let me in wi' your gude-will I shall enter without it," and with that he laid his shoulder to the door, with the full intention of storming the fortress. A whispering within made him pause a moment.

"And must I let him in ?" murmured the old woman to some one who seemed in the interior.

"Yes," answered a half-suppressed voice ; "he may enter—he is but one, and we are three—a lowland tup, I suppose."

The door was slowly opened. The person who performed this unwilling act was a woman apparently above seventy, haggard and bent by an accumulation of infirmity and years. Her face was pale, malignant, and wrinkled, and her little sharp peering eyes seemed, like those of the adder, to shoot forth evil upon whomsoever she gazed. As William entered, he encountered this aged sibyl, her natural hideousness exposed full to his gaze by the little rush-light she held up above her head, the better to view the tall Borderer.

"You want a night's lodging, say you ? Ay, nae doubt, like many others frae the south, come to trouble honest folks."

"There's nae need to talk about troubling," said Laidlaw. "If you have trouble you shall be paid for it ; and since you are pleased, my auld lady, to talk about the south, let me say a word of the north. I have got money in my pouch to pay my way wherever I go, and this is mair than some of your bonnie Highland lairds can say. Here it lies, my lady !" and he struck with the palm of his

hand the large and well-replenished pocket-book which bulged out from his side.

"I want nane of your money," said the old crone, her eyes nevertheless sparkling with a malicious joy; "walk in; you will have the company of strangers for the night."

He followed her advice, and went to the end of the cottage, near which, upon the floor, blazed a large fire of peat. There was no grate, and for chimney a hole in the roof sufficed, through which the smoke ascended in large volumes. Here he saw the company mentioned by the sibyl. It consisted of three men, of the most fierce and savage aspect. Two of them were dressed as sailors, the third in a sort of Highland garb.

He had never seen any persons who had so completely the air of desperadoes. The two first were dark in their complexions, their black bushy beards apparently unshorn for many weeks. Their expressions were dark and ominous, and bespoke spirits within which had been trained up in crime. Nor were the red locks of the third, and his fiery countenance, and sharp, cruel eyes, less appalling, and less indicative of evil.

So near an intercourse with such people, and under those circumstances, would have thrown a chill over most hearts; but William Laidlaw was naturally a stranger to fear, and, at any rate, his great strength gave him a confidence which it was very difficult to shake; he had, besides, a most unbounded confidence in scientific cudgel-playing, and in the virtues of "Knock-him-down."

These three men were seated around the fire; and when our traveller came alongside of them, and saluted them, not one returned his salutation. Each sat in dogged silence. If they deigned to recognise him, it was by looks of ferocious sternness, and these looks were momentary, for they instantly relapsed into their former state of sullen apathy.

William was at this time beset by two most unfortunate inclinations. He had an incorrigible desire, first, to speak, and secondly, to eat; and never had any propensities come upon a man so *malapropos*. He sat for a few minutes absolutely nonplussed about the method of gratifying them. At length, after revolving the matter deeply in his mind, he contrived to get out with the following words:

"I have been thinking, gudewife, that something to eat is very agreeable when a body is hungry." No answer.

" I have been thinking, mistress, that when a man is hungry he is the better of something to eat." No answer.

" Did you hear what I was saying, mistress ? "

" Perfectly weel."

" And what is your opinion of the matter ? "

" My opinion is, that a hungry man is the better of being fed." Such was the old dame's reply ; and he thought he could perceive a smile of bitter ridicule curl up the savage lips of his three neighbours.

" Was there ever such an auld hag ? " thought the yeoman to himself. " There she sits at her wheel, and cares nae mair for a fellow-creature than I would for a dead sheep."

" Mistress," continued he, " I see you will not tak' hints. I maun then tell you plainly that I am the next door to starvation, and that I will thank you for something to eat."

This produced the desired effect, for she instantly got up from her wheel, went to a cupboard, and produced a plentiful supply of cold venison, bread and cheese, together with a large bottle full of the finest whisky.

William now felt quite at his ease. Putting " Knock-him-down " beside him, and planting himself at the table, he commenced operations in a style that would have done honour to Friar Tuck himself. Venison, bread and cheese disappeared like magic. So intently did he keep to his occupation that he neither thought nor cared about any other object.

Everything which came under the denomination of eatable having disappeared from the table, he proceeded to discuss the contents of the black bottle which stood by. He probably indulged rather freely in this respect, for shortly after commencing he became very talkative, and seemed resolved, at all risks, to extract conversation from his mute companions.

" You will be in the smuggling trade, frien' ? " said he, slapping the shoulder of one of his dark-complexioned neighbours. The fellow started from his seat, and looked upon the Borderer with an expression of anger and menace, but he was suddenly quieted by one of his companions, who whispered into his ear, " Hush, Roderick ; never mind him ; the time is not yet come."

" I was saying, frien'," reiterated Laidlaw, without perceiving this interruption, " that you will be in the smuggling trade ? "

" Maybe I am," was the fellow's answer.

"And you are a fish of the same water?" continued William to the second, who nodded assent.

"And you, frien', wi' the red hair, what are ye?"

"Humph!"

"Humph!" cried the Borderer; "that is one way of answering questions—humph, ay humph, very good; ha, ha, your health, Mr. Humph!" and he straightway swallowed another glass of the potent spirit.

These three personages, during the whole of his various harangues, preserved the same unchanged silence, replying to his broken and unconnected questions by nods and monosyllables. They even held no verbal communication with one another, but each continued apparently within himself the thread of his own gloomy meditations. The night by this time waxed late; the spirit began to riot a little in the Borderer's head; and concluding that there was no sociality among persons who would neither drink nor speak, he quaffed off a final glass, and dropped back on his chair.

How long he remained in this state cannot be known. Certain it is, he was rather suddenly awakened from it by a hand working its way cautiously and gently into his bosom. At first he did not know what to make of this: his ideas were as yet unrallied, and by a sort of instinct he merely pressed his left hand against the spot by way of resistance. The same force continuing, however, to operate as formerly, he opened his eyes, and saw himself surrounded by the three strangers. The red-haired ruffian was the person who had aroused him—the two others, one of them armed with a cutlass, stood by. William was so astonished at this scene that he could form no opinion on the subject. His brain still rang with the strange visions that had crossed it, and with the influence of intoxication.

"I am thinking, honest man, that you are stealing my pocket-book," was the first ejaculation he got out with, gazing at the same time with a bewildered look on the plunderer.

"Down with the villain!" thundered one of these worthies at the same instant; "and you, sir," brandishing his cutlass over the Borderer's head, "resist, and I will cleave you to the collar."

This exclamation acted like magic upon Laidlaw; it seemed to sober him in an instant, and point out his perilous situation.

The trio had rushed upon him, and attempted to hold him down. Now or never was the period to put his immense strength to the trial.

Collecting all his energies, he bounded from their grasp, and his herculean fist falling like a sledge-hammer upon the forehead of him who carried the cutlass, the ruffian tumbled headlong to the earth. In a moment more he stood in the centre of the cottage, whirling "Knock-him-down" around his head in the attitude of defiance. Such was now his appearance of determined courage and strength that the two ruffians opposed to him, although powerful men, and armed with bludgeons, did not dare to advance, but recoiled several paces from their single opponent. He had escaped thus far, but his situation was still very hazardous, for the men, though baffled, kept their eyes intently fixed upon him, and seemed only to wait an opportunity when they could rush on with most advantage. Besides, the one he had felled had just got up, and with his cutlass joined the others. If they had made an attack upon him, his great skill and vigour would in all probability have brought one of them to the ground, but then he would have been assailed by the two others; and the issue of such a contest, armed as one of them was, could not but be highly dangerous.

Meanwhile the men, although none of them ventured to rush singly upon the Borderer, began to advance in a body, as if for the purpose of getting behind him.

"Now," thought William, "if I can but keep you quiet till I get opposite the door, I may show you a trick that will astonish you."

So planning his scheme, he continued retreating before his assailants, and holding up his cudgel in the true scientific position till he came within a foot of the door; most fortunately it stood wide open. One step aside, and the threshold was gained—another, and it was passed.

In the twinkling of an eye, swift like a thunderbolt, fell "Knock-him-down" upon the head of the most forward opponent, and in another out bolted William Laidlaw from the cottage. The whole was the work of an instant. He who received the blow fell stunned and bleeding to the ground, and his companions were so confounded that they stood mute and gazing at each other for several seconds. Their resolution was soon taken, and in a mood between shame and revenge, they sallied out after the fugitive. Their speed was, however, employed in vain against the fleetest runner of the Cheviots, and they were afraid to separate, lest each might encounter singly this formidable adversary, who perhaps might have dealt with them in the same manner as Horatius did with the Curiatii of old. The pursuit continued but a short way, as the yeoman more than double distanced his

pursuers in the first two minutes, and left them no chance of coming up with him.

It was by this time three in the morning. The intense darkness of midnight had worn away, and though the sun was yet beneath the horizon, a sort of reflected light so far prevailed as to render near objects visible. In the course of an hour the hill tops became exposed above the misty wreaths which hung heavily upon their sides, and which began to dissolve away and float slowly down the glen in pale columns.

In a short time a hue like that of twilight rendered distinctly visible the mountain boundaries of the vale. William walked onward with his usual speed. Such at last was his prodigious rapidity of movement that he utterly lost the use of his senses. He appeared to himself to fly rather than walk over the earth; his head became giddy, and it is difficult to say where his flight might have ended, when "Knock-him-down" was suddenly swept from his hand. This in a moment arrested his speed, for such was his sympathy with this companion that he could not possibly get on, or even live without it.

"Knock-him-down, whare are ye?" was his first exclamation at the departure of his favourite. "I say, Knock-him-down—whare are ye?" Here honest William sat down upon the heath to bemoan his misfortune. Now for the first time in his life he parted with all recollection. A strange, mysterious, indescribable ringing took place in his ears—the hills reeled—his head nodded once, twice, and again—and in a few seconds he dropped into a profound sleep.

This may be considered an epoch in the yeoman's life, for here he, for the first time, according to his own account, was visited by a dream. Out of the pale mist of the glen he imagined he saw approach him the very person to whose house he was bound. The aspect of this man was melancholy—his face deadly pale—and as he stood opposite to the Borderer and said, "William Laidlaw," the latter felt his flesh creep with an unutterable dread.

"William Laidlaw," continued he, "you are going to my house, but you will not find me at home. I have gone to a far country—Neil M'Kinnon and his two cousins sent me there. You will find my body in the pit near the Cairn of Dalgulish. The money you are bringing to me give to my poor family, and may God bless you!" Having pronounced these words the figure vanished, nor had the Borderer the power to recall it. He did not, however, awake, but lay

in the same restless state till the sun, shining in all the splendour of an August morning, burst upon him.

William awoke a sober man. The morning was indeed beautiful. The sun shone in his strength, lighting up the vale with a flood of radiance. On the summits of the hills not a cloud rested—all was clear and lucid as crystal, and the untainted sky hung like a vault of pure sapphire over the thousand rocks and glens beneath.

The object which first arrested our friend's attention was "Knock-him-down" stuck up in the middle of a whin bush, and his immediate impulse was to relieve it from this inglorious situation. Having done this, stretched his limbs, and examined his pocket-book, which he found "tight and well," he proceeded on his journey. He was naturally the reverse of superstitious, but somehow or other a train of unpleasant thoughts came over him, which he could not get rid of. His mind was so unaccustomed to thinking of any kind, and, above all, to gloomy thinking, that he knew not what to make of the matter. He whistled and sang in vain to dispel the feeling. The same load hung upon his mind, and oppressed it grievously.

In this train he found himself at length in front of the clachan of Ballacher. This small village was in possession of the individual to whom he was journeying. His dwelling, a large farmhouse, was in the centre ; the cottages which surrounded it were occupied by his servants and tenantry.

It was about mid-day when he entered the village. It was deserted, while a strange and subduing melancholy seemed to hang over it. He strode slowly on, but no human being made his appearance. At length a funeral procession, followed by many women and children, came silently up the middle avenue of the village. It might be a deception of his fancy, but he thought the looks of the mourners were more sad and more profoundly interesting than he had ever witnessed on any previous occasion. He followed the convoy to the cemetery, which was not far distant, and when the last shovelful of earth was thrown upon the grave, he inquired whose funeral it was.

"It is that of Allaster Wilson, our master," was the reply.

"Good Heaven! and how did he die?" cried William, deeply agitated.

"That no one knows," answered an old man who stood by; "he was found murdered; but a day will come when the Lord will cause his blood to be requited on his murderers."

“ And where was his body found ? ” said the astonished Borderer.

“ In the chalk-pit near the Cairn of Dalgulish,” replied the senior, and he wiped his aged eyes and walked slowly away.

William started back with horror and instantly recollected his dream. It was indeed the very individual to whose house he was journeying that he now saw laid in his grave. His first duty was to go to the bereaved family of his departed friend, and to comfort the widow and the fatherless. A tear rolled from his manly eye as he entered the mansion of sorrow ; and when he saw the relict and the weeping family of his friend he thought his heart would have died within him. Having paid into their hands the money he owed them, and performed various offices of kindness, he bade them for the present adieu, and went to Inverness.

He had no business to transact there ; his only object was to obtain the aid of justice in pursuit of the three men whom he supposed to be the murderers. Neil M’Kinnon was apprehended at the house where Laidlaw first saw him ; but though his guilt was strongly suspected, no positive proof could be adduced against him, and he was dismissed. The two other men were never heard of. It was supposed that they had gone on board a smuggling cutter which left Fort-William, and afterwards perished, with all its crew, in the Sound of Mull.

The dream still continued to agitate the yeoman’s mind to a great degree, and from being the gayest farmer of the Borders, he returned as thoughtful as a philosopher.

THOMAS GILLESPIE

1777-1844

THE SUICIDE'S GRAVE

THE suicide's grave—where is it? It is at the meeting or crossing of three public roads; the body had been thrust down, under the darkness of night, into a coffinless grave. The breast, formerly torn and lacerated by passions, has lately been mangled into horrid deformity by the pointed stake; and the traveller, as he walks, rides, or drives along, regards the spot with an eye of suspicion, and blesses his stars that he is a living man. The suicide's grave—where is it? On the bare and cold top of that mountain which divides Lanark from Dumfriesshire. There you may see congregated the hoody crow, and the grey gled, and the eagle—but they are not congregated in peace and in friendship; they are fearful rivals, and terrible notes do they utter as they contend over the body of her who was fair, and innocent, and happy.

Alas, for Alice Lorimer! Her story is a sad one, and it would require the pen of a Sterne or a Wilson to do it justice. But the circumstances are of themselves so full of mournful interest that, even though stated in the most simple language, they cannot fail, I should think, to interest—nay, I will say it at once, to excite sympathy and pity; for why should we not pity the unhappy and unfortunate? They are pitied in poverty, in obscurity, in sickness, in death. Why should not we even pity the guilty and abandoned? They are pitied in prison, on the day of trial, and most of all in the hour of execution. There—even there—on that platform, the murderer himself obtains that sympathy which we refuse to the suicide. He who has only ruined, destroyed himself is held in greater abhorrence than the man who has ruined innocence, and even murdered the unhappy mother and unborn babe. Away with such unjust and ungenerous distinctions! Away, and to the highway and to the mountain top, and to the raven, and the falcon, and the eagle with the seducer and the murderer; and let the poor suicide's grave, in future, be in consecrated ground, where remembrance may soon overlook his woes and his very existence. Let him sleep unknowing and unknown in the churchyard of his fathers.

Alice Lorimer I myself knew—I was intimately acquainted with her—I was a companion and a favourite. In frosty weather we have frequented the same slides, and, when Alice was in danger of falling, I have caught her in my arms; we have hopped together for hours, playing at beds, and I even made Alice privy to all my birds' nests.

Hers was indeed a playful, but a gentle nature. Her heart was light, her voice clear and cheerful, and her whole affections were engrossed by an only surviving parent, a widowed father. Alice was his first-born and his last. Her mother had given her life at the expense of her own; and her father, a shoemaker in the village of Croalchapel, devoted his whole spare time to the education of Alice. Often have I seen him, with the shoe on the last and the elshun in his hand, pursuing his daily labours, but listening attentively all the while to Ally's readings. It was thus the child was taught to read the Bible, to say her prayers, and ultimately to make her father's dinner and her own.

Their cottage stood at what was termed the "*head* of the town," on a sunny eminence looking to the west; behind it were the shade and the shelter of many trees, of the widespread oak, the tall ash, and the sweetly-scented birch. On Sabbath afternoons John Lorimer might be seen with his beloved child, clean and neatly dressed, ascending to the top of the Bormoors braes, and, from the green summit of the eminence, looking abroad over a landscape certainly not surpassed by any which has yet come under the writer's observation.

On his one hand lay the worn and silver-clasped Bible, from which portions of the gospels were occasionally read, and on the other reposed Poodle, a little wire-haired dog of uncommon natural parts, which had been greatly improved by education. Poodle could bark and do all manner of things. His eyes would "glisten in friendship, or beam in reply." His nose was a platform, from which many little pieces of bread had been tossed up into the air, and afterwards snapped. He was all obedience to little Alice in particular, and at her bidding would do anything but swim—he had, somehow or other, contracted an aversion for the water, probably referable to some mischievous boys having one day thrown him into Closeburn Loch.

Alice and I went to school together. Her father's cottage lay directly in my way, and I called daily for the sweet girl. The other boys laughed at me, and made a fool of me, and asked me if I had seen Alice this morning. I could not stand this—for I revered the little

innocent lamb—so I hit the Mr. Impertinence a blow in the stomach, which sent him reeling over several benches. I was no more taunted about Alice Lorimer. There were a number of older and less feminine girls at the school at this time. At play-hours these congregated by themselves behind the school, whilst the boys occupied the playground in front.

Alice was one day severely handled by a neighbour's daughter, who had fixed a quarrel on her and then beat her severely, calling her all manner of names, and, amongst others, honouring her with my own. I found the poor child—for I was a few years older—in tears, as we met in the Castle-wood on our way home. It was with difficulty that I drew, bit by bit, the whole truth from her ; and I resolved to punish, in one way or other, the rude and ill-hearted aggressor in this matter.

I could not think of punishing her myself ; but I got Jean Watson, the servant-maid of the factor's clerk, to catch the culprit after dark and chastise her in her own way. Tibby Murdoch was a most revengeful person—quite the antipodes to sweet Alice Lorimer. She was the daughter of a quarryman, who had come only a few years before to reside in the place and work at the Laird of Closeburn's limeworks. He was a brutal and passionate man ; and, understanding from his daughter how matters stood, and that poor Alice Lorimer had been the cause of his daughter's disaster, he left his work at mid-day, and, taking a horse-whip in his hand, entered the shoemaker's shop.

Not finding Alice, he proceeded to apply it to the shoulders of John Lorimer, who was a little, but strong, well-made man, and, though the other was tall, bull-headed, and extremely athletic, he closed at once with his enemy. Murdoch's strength, however, was superior to John's ; and he contrived to roll over upon his enemy, and at last to thrust his head immediately under a grate containing live coals for melting some rosin which was about to be used. The crucible was upturned ; and, unfortunately, the whole contents were spread over John Lorimer's face. He was dreadfully burned ; but, what was worst of all, he lost the sight of one eye by the accident, and was very materially injured in the other.

On an investigation by the proper authorities, Murdoch was convicted of the assault, and imprisoned for twelve calendar months. During his imprisonment, revenge upon poor Lorimer was his constant theme ; and, when the time expired, he removed to the parish of Keir, and found employment in a lime-work belonging to Dr. Hunter of

Barjarg. He was still, unfortunately, within an hour's walk of Croal-chapel, and lay, like a cat in a corner, watching his prey.

In the meantime, John Lorimer recovered the use of one eye, and pursued his quiet and useful labour as formerly. As his daughter Alice advanced in years, she grew in loveliness and virtue. At twelve years of age she became her father's housekeeper, and conducted herself in that capacity with surprising sense and prudence.

It was at this time that I left school for college ; and I spent the last night with Alice Lorimer. I was then a lad of sixteen, and she, as I have said, was twelve. I was then as innocent as it is possible for a youth of sixteen to be ; nay, I was absolutely shy and bashful to a great degree, and would have shrunk from any advances, even to innocent familiarity, with the other sex. But I was not in love with Alice Lorimer. True, she preferred my company to that of any other person, save her dearly beloved father ; but we never talked of love ; and as to Alice, her friendship for me was as pure as the love of angels. She could not think of parting with me—of perhaps (and she burst into tears) never seeing me again. I must write to her—and I must come back and see her, and talk funnily to her father, who liked a joke—and I must—I forget how many “ musts ” there were ; but they lasted till half-past one o'clock. I parted with her at her father's door. I never saw her again !

I was coming down Enterkin late in a fine moonlight night in the spring of 1806. I was on my way to join a family in Galloway, where I long acted in the capacity of tutor. I had then attained my twenty-first year ; and I chanced to be calculating—as I expected seeing Alice Lorimer on the following day—what her age must be. I calculated, by the common rule of proportion, that if Alice was twelve when I was sixteen, she would be seventeen now that I was twenty-one. Seventeen ! I repeated, just seventeen !—and I urged on the pony instinctively, as if hastening towards Croalchapel.

But I had been five years at Edinburgh at college. What a change had come over the spirit of my dreams during that period ! I had had to contend with fortune in many ways ; had been often disappointed, and sometimes driven almost to despair ; again I had prospered, got into lucrative employment, become a member of speaking societies, distinguished myself by talking sense and nonsense right and left. I had spent many merry evenings in Johnnie Dowie's ; and

had seen Lady Charlotte Campbell and Tom Sheridan in a box at the theatre.

In fact, I was not now the same being I was when I left for college ; and I felt that, however fair and faultless Alice Lorimer might be, she could never be mine—I could never be hers ; our fortunes were separated by a barrier which, when I went to college, I did not clearly perceive. In fact, my ambition now taught me to aim at the Bar or the Church ; and I knew that, for years to come, I must be contented with a single life, which, in Edinburgh in particular, I had learned to endure without murmuring.

Yet I thought of poor Alice with most kindly feelings, and had some secret doubts upon the propriety of exposing myself in her presence to a revival of old times and former feelings. In this tone of mind I was jogging on, with half a bottle of Mrs. Otto's (of Leadhills) best port wine under my belt, and endeavouring to collect some rhymes to the word Lorimer ; but either the muse was unpropitious, or the word, like that mentioned in Horace, refused to stand in verse.

It so happened that I had given up the effort, and was about to dismiss the subject altogether, when I discovered, near the bottom of the pass, a number of figures advancing upon me in an opposite direction. As they came up the pass, under a meridian moon, I could discover that they carried something on a barrow, which, on nearer inspection, I found to be a coffin. I drew my pony to the side of the road, lifted my hat reverentially, and the party, consisting of upwards of twenty, passed in solemn silence. The incident was a little startling, and somewhat unnatural, not to say superhuman ; for, why were these people carrying a coffin up the long and narrow pass which separates Lanark from Dumfriesshire, so late at night, and in such mysterious silence ?

A thought struck me, which contributed not a little to ease my mind in regard to supernaturals ; were they a company of smugglers from Bowness, taking this method of carrying forward their untaxed goods to Lanark and Glasgow ? Ruminating on this subject, and laughing inwardly at my own ingenuity and discernment, I arrived at last at Thornhill, where I remained for the night.

Next morning I reached Croalchapel, on my way to my birthplace. I went up to that very door at which I had parted with Alice some five years before, and endeavoured to open it ; but it was shut and locked. I looked in at the end-window, above the fire-place, but there was

neither fire nor inhabitant—all was silence. My heart sank within me ; and a neighbour, who saw my ignorance and mistake, advertised me that both parent and child were no more, and that Alice Lorimer was *buried* !—here he hesitated—“ at least,” said he, “ committed to the earth, last night ! ”

“ Was she not buried by her father in the burial-ground of the Lorimers of Closeburn ? ” said I hastily, and in an agitated tone. The man looked me in the face attentively, and, probably then for the first time recognising me, waved his hand, burst into tears, and left me. I hastened to the home of my fathers, half distracted. My mother still lived and enjoyed good health, and from her I learned the following particulars.

John Lorimer’s sight, she said, served him for a time, during which he wrought as usual, and his daughter grew to be a tall and handsome woman ; but at last it began to fail. Alice perceived this, and was most anxious to provide for her father under this irremediable calamity. But it was a severe struggle to make ends meet. In the meantime she had several offers of marriage, but refused them all, as she could not think of leaving her poor blind parent alone and helpless, and none of her lovers were rich enough to present a home to a supernumerary inmate.

One evening, whilst she was sitting with old Poodle by the fire, Mr. John Murdoch made his appearance. Her father had gone early to bed, and did not know of the man’s visit. He came, he said, as a repentant sinner to relieve her necessities. He had occasioned her father’s blindness, and he was glad to be made the instrument of bringing some pecuniary relief. Thus saying, he put into her hands a five-pound note, and, without waiting for a reply, took his departure. This startled poor Alice not a little ; she looked at the money, then thought of the man, and again listened to see if her father was sleeping. At last she put it into her chest, determined not to make use of it unless in case of necessity. The factor, who had hitherto been lenient, became urgent for the rent. There were two years due, and the five-pound note exactly covered the debt ; away therefore it went into the factor’s hands, and poor Alice returned thanks on her knees to Heaven, that had sent her the means of keeping from her father the knowledge of their situation.

In a few days Murdoch found her at the washing-green, and entered more particularly into the history of the money. He said it had been

sent by one who had seen and admired her. He was on a visit at Barjarg, the proprietor being his uncle. He was the son and heir of a very rich man, not expected to live many months. He was determined to please himself in marrying, having observed great misery arise from adopting a contrary plan, and he wished, in fine, to cultivate a further acquaintance with Alice.

In short, after exhibiting great reluctance to agree to a secret interview, and after having again and again tried to get words to communicate the whole matter to her father, a young gentleman of gaudy and genteel appearance made his way out of the adjoining wood, and was introduced by Murdoch as young Johnstone of Westerhall.

Few words passed—poor Alice was quite nonplussed—she felt that she was not equal to this awful trial, and yet there was something fearfully pleasant in it. A young man, handsome and rich—her father blind and helpless—her hand quite at her own disposal—and independence and comfort brought to the good man's house for life! Her lover, however, did not press the thing further that time; he took his departure along with Murdoch, and Alice was a second time left to her own reflections. These, however, soon informed her that she was on the brink of perdition. She ran at once to her father, and, in a paroxysm of feeling, informed him of all that had passed. He reproved her, but gently, for her having devoted the money to the purpose which she mentioned; informed her that he was richer than she supposed, for he had just five pounds which her sainted mother had put into his hand on the marriage day; and that he had kept it sacred against the expenses of his funeral. He would now willingly give it to recover their house, and to free her from all temptation to sin.

Alice wept; but she felt comforted in the assurance that, by repaying the money and breaking off all connection with Murdoch and Johnstone, she was doing right. Accordingly, she went to bed with a satisfied mind, determined next day to find out Murdoch's dwelling. She dressed herself in her best, and set out, soon after breakfast, for Barjarg Castle, never to see her father again. She was betrayed by the revengeful Murdoch to a heartless debauchee; was carried by force in a chaise to Dumfries; was lodged by Johnstone in convenient quarters.

But in the meantime poor John Lorimer missed his daughter, and immediately guessed the cause of it. He knew that his daughter was

young and beautiful ; that a villain had been endeavouring to inveigle her ; that a still greater villain, Murdoch, had betrayed her ; and that, in a word, she was now a poor dishonoured woman. He knew, or thought he knew, all this, and was found dead next morning in his bed.

Tired with fruitless efforts to gain his purpose, Johnstone at last permitted Alice to depart. In a few hours she was at her father's house ; but it was desolate and silent. A paper which was put into my hands was evidently written by Alice. She expressed her determination to follow her dear father into another and a better world, and hoped Heaven would forgive her. It was her funeral I met at Enterkin. Hers was

The poor suicide's grave.

JOHN GALT

1779-1839

THE BLACK FERRY

I WAS then returning from my first session at college. The weather had for some time before been uncommonly wet, every brook and stream was swollen far beyond its banks, the meadows were flooded, and the river itself was increased to a raging Hellespont, insomuch that the ferry was only practicable for an hour before and after high tide.

The day was showery and stormy, by which I was detained at the inn until late in the afternoon, so that it was dark before I reached the ferry-house, and the tide did not serve for safe crossing until midnight. I was therefore obliged to sit by the fire and wait the time, a circumstance which gave me some uneasiness, for the ferryman was old and infirm, and Dick his son, who usually attended the boat during the night, happened to be then absent, the day having been such that it was not expected any travellers would seek to pass over that night.

The presence of Dick was not, however, absolutely necessary, for the boat swung from side to side by a rope anchored in the middle of the stream, and, on account of the strong current, another rope had been stretched across by which passengers could draw themselves over without assistance, an easy task to those who had the sleight of it, but it was not so to me, who still wore my arm in a sling.

While sitting at the fireside conversing with the ferryman and his wife, a smart, good-looking country lad, with a recruit's cockade in his hat, came in, accompanied by a young woman who was far advanced in pregnancy. They were told the state of the ferry, and that unless the recruit undertook to conduct the boat himself, they must wait the return of Dick.

They had been only that day married, and were on their way to join a detachment of the regiment in which Ralph Nocton, as the recruit was called, had that evening enlisted, the parish officers having obliged him to marry the girl. Whatever might have been their former love and intimacy, they were not many minutes in the house when he became sullen and morose towards her ; nor was she more

amiable towards him. He said little, but he often looked at her with an indignant eye, as she reproached him for having so rashly enlisted, to abandon her and his unborn baby, assuring him that she would never part from him while life and power lasted.

Though it could not be denied that she possessed both beauty and an attractive person, there was yet a silly vixen humour about her ill calculated to conciliate. I did not therefore wonder to hear that Nocton had married her with reluctance ; I only regretted that the parish officers were so inaccessible to commiseration, and so void of conscience as to be guilty of rendering the poor fellow miserable for life to avert the hazard of the child becoming a burden on the parish.

The ferryman and his wife endeavoured to reconcile them to their lot ; and the recruit, who appeared to be naturally reckless and generous, seemed willing to be appeased ; but his weak companion was capricious and pettish. On one occasion, when a sudden shower beat hard against the window, she cried out, with little regard to decorum, that she would go no farther that night.

" You may do as you please, Mary Blake," said Nocton, " but go I must, for the detachment marches to-morrow morning. It was only to give you time to prepare to come with me that the Captain consented to let me remain so late in the town."

She, however, only remonstrated bitterly at his cruelty in forcing her to travel, in her condition, and in such weather. Nocton refused to listen to her, but told her somewhat doggedly, more so than was consistent with the habitual cheerful cast of his physiognomy, " that although he had already been ruined by her, he trusted she had not yet the power to make him a deserter."

He then went out, and remained some time alone. When he returned, his appearance was surprisingly changed ; his face was of an ashy paleness ; his eyes bright, febrile, and eager, and his lip quivered as he said :

" Come, Mary, I can wait no longer ; the boat is ready, the river is not so wild, and the rain is over."

In vain she protested ; he was firm ; and she had no option but either to go or to be left behind. The old ferryman accompanied them to the boat, saw them embark, and gave the recruit some instructions how to manage the ropes, as it was still rather early in the tide. On returning into the house, he remarked facetiously to his wife :

"I can never see why young men should be always blamed, and all pity reserved for the damsels."

At this moment a rattling shower of rain and hail burst like a platoon of small shot on the window, and a flash of vivid lightning was followed by one of the most tremendous peals of thunder I have ever heard.

"Hark!" cried the old woman startling, "was not that a shriek?"

We listened, but the cry was not repeated; we rushed to the door, but no other sound was heard than the raging of the river, and the roar of the sea-waves breaking on the bar.

Dick soon after came home, and the boat having swung back to her station, I embarked with him, and reached the opposite inn, where I soon went to bed. Scarcely had I laid my head on the pillow, when a sudden inexplicable terror fell upon me; I shook with an unknown horror; I was, as it were, conscious that some invisible being was hovering beside me, and could hardly muster fortitude enough to refrain from rousing the house. At last I fell asleep; it was perturbed and unsound; strange dreams and vague fears scared me awake, and in them were dreadful images of a soldier murdering a female, and open graves, and gibbet-irons swinging in the wind. My remembrance has no parallel to such another night.

In the morning, the cloud on my spirit was gone, and I rose at my accustomed hour, and cheerily resumed my journey. It was a bright morning, all things were glittering and fresh in the rising sun, the recruit and his damsel were entirely forgotten, and I thought no more of them.

But when the night returned next year, I was seized with an unaccountable dejection; it weighed me down; I tried to shake it off, but was unable; the mind was diseased, and could no more by resolution shake off its discomfort, than the body by activity can expel a fever. I retired to my bed greatly depressed, but nevertheless I fell asleep. At midnight, however, I was summoned to awake by a hideous and undefinable terror; it was the same vague consciousness of some invisible visitor being near that I had once before experienced, as I have described, and I again recollected Nocton and Mary Blake in the same instant; I saw—for I cannot now believe that it was less than apparitional—the unhappy pair reproaching one another.

As I looked, questioning the integrity of my sight, the wretched bride turned round and looked at me. How shall I express my horror,

when, for the ruddy beauty which she once possessed, I beheld the charnel visage of a skull ; I started up and cried aloud with such alarming vehemence, that the whole inmates of the house, with lights in their hands, were instantly in the room—shame would not let me tell what I had seen, and, endeavouring to laugh, I accused the nightmare of the disturbance.

This happened while I was at a watering-place on the west coast. I was living in a boarding-house with several strangers ; among them was a tall pale German gentleman, of a grave impressive physiognomy. He was the most intelligent and shrewdest observer I have ever met with, and he had to a singular degree the gift of a discerning spirit. In the morning when we rose from the breakfast-table, he took me by the arm, and led me out upon the lawn in front of the house ; and when we were at some distance from the rest of the company, said :

“ Excuse me, Sir, for I must ask an impertinent question. Was it indeed the dream of the nightmare that alarmed you last night ? ”

“ I have no objection to answer you freely ; but tell me first, why you ask such a question ? ”

“ It is but reasonable. I had a friend who was a painter ; none ever possessed an imagination which discerned better how nature in her mysteries should appear. One of his pictures was the scene of Brutus when his evil genius summoned him to Philippi, and, strange to tell, you bear some resemblance to the painted Brutus. When, with the others, I broke into your room last night, you looked so like the Brutus in his picture, that I could have sworn you were amazed with the vision of a ghost.”

I related to him what I have done to you.

“ It is wonderful,” said he ; “ what inconceivable sympathy hath linked you to the fate of these unhappy persons. There is something more in this renewed visitation than the phantasma of a dream.”

The remark smote me with an uncomfortable sensation of dread, and for a short time my flesh crawled as it were upon my bones. But the impression soon wore off, and was again entirely forgotten.

When the anniversary again returned, I was seized with the same heaviness and objectless horror of mind ; it hung upon me with bodings and auguries until I went to bed, and then after my first sleep I was a third time roused by another fit of the same inscrutable panic. On this occasion, however, the vision was different. I beheld only

Nocton, pale and wounded, stretched on a bed, and on the coverlet lay a pair of new epaulettes, as if just unfolded from a paper.

For seven years I was thus annually afflicted. The vision in each was different, but I saw no more of Mary Blake. On the fourth occasion, I beheld Nocton sitting in the uniform of an aide-de-camp at a table, with the customary tokens of conviviality before him ; it was only part of a scene, such as one beholds in a mirror.

On the fifth occasion, he appeared to be ascending, sword in hand, the rampart of a battery ; the sun was setting behind him, and the shadows and forms of a strange land, with the domes and pagodas of an oriental country, lay in wide extent around : it was a picture, but far more vivid than painting can exhibit.

On the sixth time, he appeared again stretched upon a couch ; his complexion was sullen, not from wounds, but disease, and there appeared at his bedside the figure of a general officer, with a star on his breast, with whose conversation he appeared pleased, though languid.

But on the seventh and last occasion on which the horrors of the visions were repeated, I saw him on horseback in a field of battle ; and while I looked at him, he was struck on the face by a sabre, and the blood flowed down upon his regimentals.

Years passed after this, during which I had none of these dismal exhibitions. My mind and memory resumed their healthful tone. I recollected, without these intervening years of oblivion, Nocton and Mary Blake, occasionally, as one thinks of things past, and I told my friends of the curious periodical returns of the visitations to me as remarkable metaphysical phenomena. By an odd coincidence, it so happened that my German friend was always present when I related my dreams. He in the intervals sometimes spoke to me of them, but my answers were vague, for my reminiscences were imperfect. It was not so with him. All I told he distinctly recorded and preserved in a book wherein he wrote down the minutest thing that I had witnessed in my visions. I do not mention his name, because he is a modest and retiring man, in bad health, and who has long sequestered himself from company. His rank, however, is so distinguished, that his name could not be stated without the hazard of exposing him to impertinent curiosity. But to proceed.

Exactly fourteen years—twice seven it was—I remember well, because for the first seven I had been haunted as I have described, and for the other seven I had been placed in my living. At the end of

that period of fourteen years, my German friend paid me a visit here. He came in the forenoon, and we spent an agreeable day together, for he was a man of much recondite knowledge. I have seen none so wonderfully possessed of all sorts of occult learning.

He was an astrologer of the true kind, for in him it was not a pretence but a science ; he scorned horoscopes and fortune-tellers with the just derision of a philosopher, but he had a beautiful conception of the reciprocal dependencies of nature. He affected not to penetrate to causes, but he spoke of effects with a luminous and religious eloquence. He described to me how the tides followed the phases of the moon ; but he denied the Newtonian notion that they were caused by the procession of the lunar changes. He explained to me that when the sun entered Aries, and the other signs of the zodiac, how his progression could be traced on this earth by the development of plants and flowers, and the passions, diseases, and affections of animals and man ; but that the stars were more than the celestial signs of these terrestrial phenomena he ridiculed as the conceptions of the insane theory.

His learning in the curious art of alchymy was equally sublime. He laughed at the fancy of an immortal elixir, and his notion of the mythology of the philosopher's stone was the very essence and spirituality of ethics. The elixir of immortality he described to me as an allegory, which, from its component parts, emblems of talents and virtues, only showed that perseverance, industry, good-will, and a gift from God, were the requisite ingredients necessary to attain renown.

His knowledge of the philosopher's stone was still more beautiful. He referred to the writings of the Rosicrucians, whose secrets were couched in artificial symbols, to prove that the sages of that sect were not the fools that the lesser wise of later days would represent them. The self-denial, the patience, the humility, the trusting in God, the treasuring of time by lamp and calculation which the venerable alchymists recommended, he used to say, were only the elements which constitute the conduct of the youth that would attain to riches and honour ; and these different stages which are illuminated in the alchymical volumes as descriptive of stages in the process of making the stone, were but hieroglyphical devices to explain the effects of well-applied human virtue and industry.

To me it was amazing to what clear simplicity he reduced all things, and on what a variety of subjects his bright and splendid fancy threw a fair and affecting light. All those demi-sciences—physiognomy—

palmistry—scaleology, etc., even magic and witchcraft, obtained from his interpretations a philosophical credibility.

In disquisitions on these subjects we spent the anniversary. He had by them enlarged the periphery of my comprehension ; he had added to my knowledge, and inspired me with a profounder respect for himself.

He was an accomplished musician, in the remotest, if I may use the expression, depths of the art. His performance on the pianoforte was simple, heavy, and seemingly the labour of an unpractised hand, but his expression was beyond all epithet exquisite and solemn ; his airs were grave, devotional, and pathetic, consisting of the simplest harmonic combinations ; but they were wonderful ; every note was a portion of an invocation ; every melody the voice of a passion or a feeling supplied with elocution.

We had spent the day in the fields, where he illustrated his astrological opinions by appeals to plants, and leaves, and flowers, and other attributes of the season, with such delightful perspicuity that no time can efface from the registers of my memory the substance of his discourses. In the evening he delighted me with his miraculous music, and, as the night advanced, I was almost persuaded that he was one of those extraordinary men who are said sometimes to acquire communion with spirits and dominion over demons.

Just as we were about to sit down to our frugal supper, literally or philosophically so, as if it had been served for Zeno himself, Dick, the son of the old ferryman, who by this time was some years dead, came to the door, and requested to speak with me in private. Of course I obeyed, when he informed me that he had brought across the ferry that night a gentleman officer, from a far country, who was in bad health, and whom he could not accommodate properly in the ferry-house.

"The inn," said Dick, "is too far off, for he is lame, and has an open wound in the thigh. I have therefore ventured to bring him here, sure that you will be glad to give him a bed for the night. His servant tells me that he was esteemed the bravest officer in all the service in the Mysore of India."

It was impossible to resist this appeal. I went to the door where the gentleman was waiting, and with true-heartedness expressed how great my satisfaction would be if my house could afford him any comfort.

I took him in with me to the room where my German friend was sitting. I was much pleased with the gentleness and unaffected simplicity of his manners.

He was a handsome middle-aged man—his person was robust and well formed—his features had been originally handsome, but they were disfigured by a scar, which had materially changed their symmetry. His conversation was not distinguished by any remarkable intelligence, but after the high intellectual excitement which I had enjoyed all day with my philosophical companion, it was agreeable and gentlemanly.

Several times during supper, something came across my mind as if I had seen him before, but I could neither recollect when nor where ; and I observed that more than once he looked at me as if under the influence of some research in his memory. At last, I observed that his eyes were dimmed with tears, which assured me that he then recollected me. But I considered it a duty of hospitality not to inquire aught concerning him more than he was pleased to tell himself.

In the meantime, my German friend, I perceived, was watching us both, but suddenly he ceased to be interested, and appeared absorbed in thought, while good manners required me to make some efforts to entertain my guest. This led on to some inquiry concerning the scene of his services, and he told us that he had been many years in India.

" On this day eight years ago, said he, I was in the battle of Borup-know, where I received the wound which has so disfigured me in the face."

At that moment I accidentally threw my eyes upon my German friend—the look which he gave me in answer, caused me to shudder from head to foot, and I began to ruminate of Nocton the recruit, and Mary Blake, while my friend continued the conversation in a light desultory manner, as it would have seemed to any stranger, but to me it was awful and oracular. He spoke to the stranger on all manner of topics, but ever and anon he brought him back, as if without design, to speak of the accidents of fortune which had befallen him on the anniversary of that day, giving it as a reason for his curious remarks, that most men observed anniversaries, time and experience having taught them to notice, that there were curious coincidences with respect to times, and places, and individuals—things, which of themselves form part of the great demonstration of the wisdom and skill displayed in the construction, not only of the mechanical, but the

mortal world, showing that each was a portion of one and the same thing.

"I have been," said he to the stranger, "an observer and recorder of such things. I have my book of registration here in this house; I will fetch it from my bed-chamber, and we shall see in what other things, as far as your fortunes have been concerned, how it corresponds with the accidents of your life on this anniversary."

I observed that the stranger paled a little at this proposal, and said, with an affectation of carelessness while he was evidently disturbed, that he would see it in the morning. But the philosopher was too intent upon his purpose to forbear. I know not what came upon me, but I urged him to bring the book. This visibly disconcerted the stranger still more, and his emotion became, as it were, a motive which induced me, in a peremptory manner, to require the production of the book, for I felt that strange horror, so often experienced, returning upon me; and was constrained, by an irresistible impulse, to seek an explanation of the circumstances by which I had for so many years suffered such an eclipse of mind.

The stranger seeing how intent both of us were, desisted from his wish to procrastinate the curious disclosure which my friend said he could make; but it was evident he was not at ease. Indeed he was so much the reverse, that when the German went for his book, he again proposed to retire, and only consented to abide at my jocular entreaty, until he should learn what his future fortunes were to be, by the truth of what would be told him of the past.

My friend soon returned with the book. It was a remarkable volume, covered with vellum, shut with three brazen clasps, secured by a lock of curious construction. Altogether it was a strange, antique, and necromantic-looking volume. The corner was studded with knobs of brass, with a small mirror in the centre, round which were inscribed in Teutonic characters, words to the effect, "I WILL SHOW THEE THYSELF." Before unlocking the clasp, my friend gave the book to the stranger, explained some of the emblematic devices which adorned the cover, and particularly the words of the motto that surrounded the little mirror.

Whether it was from design, or that the symbols required it, the explanations of my friend were mystical and abstruse; and I could see that they produced an effect on the stranger, so strong that it was evident he could with difficulty maintain his self-possession. The

colour entirely faded from his countenance ; he became wan and cadaverous, and his hand shook violently as he returned the volume to the philosopher, who, on receiving it back, said :

" There are things in this volume which may not be revealed to every eye, yet to those who may not discover to what they relate, they will seem trivial notations."

He then applied the key to the lock, and unclosed the volume. My stranger guest began to breathe hard and audibly. The German turned over the vellum leaves searchingly and carefully. At last he found his record and description of my last vision, which he read aloud. It was not only minute in the main circumstances in which I had seen Nocton, but it contained an account of many things, the still life, as it is called, of the picture, which I had forgotten, and among other particulars a picturesque account of the old General whom I saw standing at the bedside.

" By all that's holy," cried the stranger, " it is old Cripplington himself—the queue of his hair was, as you say, always crooked, owing to a habit he had of pulling it when vexed—where could you find the description of all this ? "

I was petrified ; I sat motionless as a statue, but a fearful vibration thrilled through my whole frame.

My friend looked back in his book, and found the description of my sixth vision. It contained the particulars of the crisis of battle in which, as the stranger described, he had received the wound in his face. It affected him less than the other, but still the effect upon him was impressive.

The record of the fifth vision produced a more visible alarm. The description was vivid to an extreme degree—the appearance of Nocton, sword in hand, on the rampart—the animation of the assault, and the gorgeous landscape of domes and pagodas, was limned with words as vividly as a painter could have made the scene. The stranger seemed to forget his anxiety, and was delighted with the reminiscences which the description recalled.

But when the record of the fourth vision was read, wherein Nocton was described as sitting in the regimentals of an aide-de-camp, at a convivial table, he exclaimed, as if unconscious of his words :

" It was on that night I had first the honour of dining with the German general."

The inexorable philosopher proceeded, and read what I had told

him of Nocton, stretched pale and wounded on a bed, with new epaulettes spread on the coverlet, as if just unfolded from a paper. The stranger started from his seat, and cried with a hollow and fearful voice :

“ This is the book of life.”

The German turned over to the second vision, which he read slowly and mournfully, especially the description of my own feelings, when I beheld the charnel visage of Mary Blake. The stranger, who had risen from his seat, and was panting with horror, cried out with a shrill howl, as it were :

“ On that night as I was sitting in my tent, methought her spirit came and reproached me.”

I could not speak, but my German friend rose from his seat, and holding the volume in his left hand, touched it with his right, and looking sternly at the stranger, said :

“ In this volume, and in your own conscience, are the evidences which prove that you are Ralph Nocton, and that on this night, twice seven years ago, you murdered Mary Blake.”

The miserable stranger lost all self-command, and cried in consternation :

“ It is true, the waters raged ; the rain and the hail came ; she bitterly upbraided me ; I flung her from the boat ; the lightning flashed, and the thunder—Oh ! it was not so dreadful as her drowning execrations.”

Before any answer could be given to this confession, he staggered from the spot, and almost in the same instant fell dead upon the floor.

ANDREW PICKEN

1788-1838

MY GRANDFATHER'S STORY

THE parents of my grandfather were stout Hanoverians. Their professions of loyalty and Protestantism were not merely lip-deep matters. They were loyal and Protestant to the backbone—to the core of the heart—to—wherever else the recess is where integrity (or rather falsehood) is supposed to lurk. They drank the health of King George and the Protestant ascendancy in endless bumpers of stern March beer; they propagated their principles among their friends; they whipped them into their children; they taught them to their servants. Little tottering urchins, a foot high, who were learning their "duty to their neighbour," learned, at the same time, to hate a Jacobite with all their heart and with all their strength. Their first lesson, when they got into three syllables, was to cry, "Destruction to the house of Stuart!" In other respects their education was not conducted on a strict plan.

In regard to my grandfather, who was in his later years (I am so sorry to say) an occasional swearer—he always traced his infirmity to his having been encouraged at three years old to bawl forth, "Curse the Pretender!" He derived this small accomplishment from the stable-boy, and it was considered dangerous to attempt to extinguish it by reproof. "We may pull up the flower and the weed together," said his father;—so my grandfather remained a swearer.

In the year 1746 his parents dwelt, and had dwelt for some years, at the small town of Calne, in Wiltshire. At that day politics ran high, and in Calne they ran higher than in other places. The tailor, the butcher, the baker, were afflicted with the epidemic. The less people had to do with the matter, the more furious they became. A leash of tailors and a brace of bakers (stitched and kneaded up together, and called "The Club,") determined to settle the question in favour of the house of Hanover. A bunch of gardeners opposed them on the Stuart side.

Each man was for "the right," and for that reason they all neglected their business, and in twelve months were supported at the expense of the parish. This they called suffering for their country. They suffered

on *both* sides for their country, which was odd enough. Yet their country never knew it till this moment, when I (unwillingly) proclaim its ingratitude. However, there were some more efficient adherents to the houses of Stuart and Hanover, as will be supposed. Among these was a Mr. Campbell, a Scotsman by birth, a lawyer by education (he had retired from the bar on a small fortune), and as completely cased in Jacobitism as the King of Denmark was in steel, namely, "from top to toe."

It is a little singular that this gentleman should have become the intimate friend of a loyal Protestant, but so it was. Matters of opinion, to be sure, interfered occasionally with this intimacy, and political jars sometimes even threatened to shake the foundations of their friendship; but, on the whole, they went on pretty smoothly, and had a most sincere respect for each other.

As Mr. Stephen Bethel, the Hanoverian, had a son (my grandfather), who was heir of his acres; so Mr. Campbell, the Jacobite, had a daughter, as fair as Eve, and the sole stay and solace of his home. What was to be expected in such a case? My grandfather fell over head and ears in love. He was at the mature age of sixteen; so he declared himself, and was—refused! If the river Marden had been deep enough, the line of Bethel had perhaps been extinct.

Fortunately, it is only a little rippling stream, and being (thereabouts) not more than four feet deep, was insufficient for the purposes of the most desperate of lovers. My grandfather probably felt this; for, after a week's deliberation, he postponed his intended suicide to an indefinite period, or, as the parliamentary reporters say, "*sine die*." In the interim he set seriously to study, and after two years of unflinching reading, he was sent abroad to travel, and remained in foreign countries two years more. Some time after his departure, Mr. Campbell was also called suddenly to Scotland upon some private business, relating, as he intimated, to a small patrimony which he possessed in that country.

It was about this time (viz. in 1745) that the Chevalier, Charles Edward, made his unsuccessful attempt upon the crown of England. I am not about to fatigue you with the particulars of this expedition; they are known to every one now, since the publication of the memoirs of Mr. Fergus MacIvor, and the celebrated Baron of Bradwardine. I must tell you, however, that among the adherents of the house of Hanover, there was not one so indignant at this invasion of the country

as the father of Mr. Walter Bethel. He strapped his sword (a huge Toledo) round his loins ; furbished up a horrible, wide-mouthed blunderbuss ; stuck a brace of huge brass-mounted pistols in his belt, and swore frightfully, both by St. George and the Dragon, that he would cut off the ears of the first rebel who dared to violate the sanctity of the county of Wilts. Had he lived farther northward, there must have been bloody noses between Mr. Stephen Bethel and the Jacobites. As it was, his anger exhausted itself in words ; a fortunate event for the heroes in philibegs and tartans, and not altogether unlucky, perhaps, for my great-grandfather.

During the absence of Campbell his daughter lived in the house of Mr. Bethel. My grandfather being at that time absent on his travels, there was no objection to this arrangement on her part ; and the young lady being a Protestant (the religion of her deceased mother), Mr. Bethel felt no apprehension that his sober family could be tainted by the scarlet principles of the woman of Babylon.

When Mary Campbell rejected the hand of my grandfather, he was, as I have said, some sixteen years of age, and she herself being as old within six months, looked down, naturally enough, upon the pretensions of so young a lover. Two years, however, spent in studying books at home (during which time he forbore to see her), and more than two years devoted to the study of man abroad, converted Mr. Walter Bethel into a promising cavalier, and made wonderful alterations in the opinions of the lady.

At the time of my grandfather's return, Mary Campbell was a resident in his father's house ; and when the old gentleman, after embracing his son, led him up to his fair guest, with " You remember my son Walter, my dear Miss Campbell ? " Miss Campbell was ready to sink with confusion. A little time, however, sufficed for her recovery, and she received my grandfather's courtesies as gracefully as anybody could be expected to do who had " never seen the Louvre."

Walter Bethel felt this. He saw a distinction—a shade, indeed, between his former favourite and the pretty Madame la Comtesse de Frontac and la belle Marquise de Vaudrecour ; but, on the whole, he was well satisfied, and, it must be added, not a little surprised also. For time, which had been so busy in lavishing accomplishments on the head of Mr. Walter Bethel, having had a little time to spare from that agreeable occupation, had employed it very advantageously in improving the mind and person of Mary Campbell. Perhaps this might be

for the purpose of once more entrapping her lover's heart. Perhaps—but it is not easy to speak as to this. The result of her improvement, however, was very speedily seen. My grandfather fell over head and ears again in love, and *this* time he was destined to be a conqueror.

He had not been four-and-twenty hours at home before his "Miss Campbell" expanded into "My dear Miss Campbell." This, in a week, dwindled into "Mary," which in its turn blossomed out into half-a-dozen little tender titles (such as are to be found in any page of Cupid's calendar), with very expressive epithets appended to them. I have heard him tell the story of his offering his hand and heart to my grandmother, while the good old lady sat with smiling, shining eyes at his side, listening to his rhapsodies, as pleased, I verily believe, as she could have been when the offer was actually made to her forty or fifty years before.

My grandfather had been returned about three months from his travels, and was absolutely basking in the sunshine of Mary's eyes, when Campbell, who had been long absent, returned suddenly and unexpectedly from Scotland. He had formerly been a tall, ruddy, athletic man; but he came back worn to the bone, pale, attenuated, and drooping. He had never given up the idea that one day or other the house of Stuart would be restored to what he called "its rights"; and when the invasion of the Pretender, which had excited such mad expectations, ended in the utter discomfiture of himself and his adherents, Campbell could scarcely bear up against his disappointment.

It was asserted, and not contradicted, that his journey to Scotland had been a mere pretext; that he had been actually in the thick of the fights of Falkirk and Preston, and had been forced to flee for his life, and to hide in caves, and brakes, and desert places, from the insatiable fury of the English troopers.

He escaped at last, however, and arrived at Calne; not free from molestation, indeed, for within four-and-twenty hours of his return, news also arrived of the approach of a detachment, sent, as it was said, to scour the country of rebels, and charged with particular instructions to seize upon our unhappy Jacobite.

"Well, Walter, my boy," said Mr. Stephen Bethel, "what is to be done?"

"I think," replied Walter, "we had better send him off to my aunt's, at Hilmarton. If he were well covered with one of your wigs, sir——"

"Eh? what? zounds!" exclaimed the other, "do you think *I'll* be accessory—do you think that I, a *Bethel*! will help to conceal one of King George's rascally enemies? Do you think——?" Mr. Stephen Bethel was lashing himself up with words as the lion does with his tail; and there was no knowing how long he would have gone on with his "do you thinks?" or, in fact, whether he ever would have stopped, had not my grandfather very naturally, and at the same time a little ingeniously, exclaimed, "Poor Mary! what will she not suffer?"

Mr. Stephen Bethel was calm in a moment. We have heard how a cannon-ball will suddenly put an end to the most violent discussion; how the ducking-stool will at once quell the else untamable tongue of the scold; but "Poor Mary!"—it was oil upon the ocean of his wrath. He was conquered and quiet in an instant.

"To be sure," said he, faltering, "poor Mary!—poor girl!" added he, "'tis a pity that such a creature should suffer for the errors of her father. As to *him*—a foolish, obstinate, headstrong Jacobite! But King George is at his heels—King George or King George's men; and *now* we shall hear whether he'll sing *The Cammels are coming*; or cry, *King James and Proud Preston* again!"

And so the old gentleman veered about from pity to wrath, from loyalty to friendship, and back again. Friendship, however, got the better at last, and he set about helping Campbell in good earnest. Walter was allowed to convey to Campbell an intimation of his danger; not that the father desired this in so many words, but as he did not absolutely prohibit it, his son interpreted his silence to his own purposes, and proceeded to the house of the unlucky Jacobite.

The first object that struck his sight on entering Campbell's house was Mary herself, evidently in deep distress. "My dearest Mary!" said he, putting his arm gently round her waist.

"Oh, Walter!" replied she, sobbing—"my father! my poor father! That unfortunate expedition of the prince——"

"Of the Pretender?" said Walter inquiringly.

"Do not carp at words," replied she; "what matter whether he be prince or pretender, now that the soldiers are coming for my dear father? Oh! he will be taken! he will be taken!" continued she, weeping and wringing her hands.

"I came to save him," said Walter. "Be comforted. Where is he? Is he within?"

"He is gone," answered she. "He received the news from a friend, and had just time to escape."

"Tell me where?" said my grandfather hastily.

"I cannot—I must not!" said she. "He charged me to keep his secret, and I must do so—even from you."

"He will be found," replied Walter in distress. "He will be hunted by these rascals, and found. Let him trust himself to me. I know a place where he may hide for a time, and our well-known principles will assure his final safety. If the storm be once blown over, my father and uncle shall exert their interest with the duke, and all will be well. So take heart, my dearest, and tell me, without more ado, where your father is. Tell me, as you value his life."

And she told; and she did well to tell; for, besides that Campbell's hiding-place was speedily searched, and that nothing short of the character of the Bethels would have been sufficient to ward off the strict inquiries that were elsewhere made, it was well that the honesty of love should not be rewarded with distrust. Mary Campbell confided in her lover—not only her heart, but her father's life; and well was the confidence repaid.

I must now give up the task of historian, and let my grandfather tell you the rest of the story himself. It was one of his thousand and one anecdotes, and it was in these words that he was accustomed to tell it:

"The day," he used to begin, "on which the soldiers came on their man-hunt to Calne was memorable for many a year. Both men and the elements seemed quarrelling with each other. The scornful loyalist, the desperate Jacobite, stood front to front, in flaming open defiance. The thunder muttered, the wind went raving about, and the rains, which had been falling heavily all night and glittering in the lightning, now came tumbling down in cataracts and sheets of water. The little runnels had grown into brooks; the brooks were formidable rivers. The Marden itself, usually so unimportant, had swollen and panted long in its narrow bounds, till at last it burst over its banks, and went flooding the country round. Notwithstanding all this, the hunters prepared to pursue their prey.

"It is a fearful thing to chase even a beast that flies for its life, but to hunt the great animal, man, must surely thrill and strike an alarm into the heart of his pursuer. What!—he whom we have smiled upon, whose hand we have clutched whose cheer we have

enjoyed ! Shall we—if he do a desperate deed which some law forbid—strip our hearts at once of all sympathy, and track him from spot to spot, through woods, and lanes, and hollows, and lonely places, till he fall into the toil ? and then go home and be content with the abstract principle of justice, and forget that we have lost a friend for ever !

“ I had got the start of the red-coats by almost a quarter of an hour ; but I found that I had to encounter impediments that I had not foreseen. I had set off with scarcely any determined idea but that of saving Campbell at all events. I took the ordinary road to the brake, where I knew that he lay concealed ; striding onwards at my best pace, sometimes running, sometimes toiling up slippery ascents, sometimes plunging along the plashy meadows, till my breath grew short and painful from excess of exertion. I still kept on my course, however, and had contrived to attain a lofty ridge of land, not very distant from the place of refuge, when all at once my eyes fell upon a broad waste of water, a vast turbid stream running at random over the country and above which nothing appeared but an occasional tree, and the long narrow slip of wood and copse which crowned the elevated land, and in which, as I concluded, my friend was hid.

“ If ever I felt real despair it was at that moment. I stopped for an instant (a dreadful instant) to think—I could not be said strictly to deliberate. I thought quickly, intensely, with a pain piercing the very centre of my heart. In three or four seconds of time I had, with the rapidity which fear produced, considered half a dozen methods of passing the water. At last I recollected a sheep-path, traversing a narrow neck of high land, on the opposite side of the inundation, which, although apparently quite covered by the floods, might nevertheless still enable me to reach the wood ; but to arrive at this path it was necessary to retrace three parts of the space which I had already travelled. I turned my steps backward instantly, and with great efforts arrived at the bridge, on the skirts of the town, just in time to hear the roll of the drum hard by, which called the soldiers to duty. I fancied that I could almost hear the click of their firelocks as they examined them, previously to their setting out in pursuit of Campbell.

“ ’Twas then I forgot everything. My legs were no longer cramped ; my breath, pent up and labouring in my breast, seemed suddenly relieved, and I ran forwards with increased speed for almost a mile, when the footsteps of a person, about the size of Campbell, which had made deep impressions on a piece of soft soil, arrested my attention.

I saw from the direction that this person must have left the highroad at that spot, and taken to the fields. I erased the marks as well as I could. Thrusting the spike of my leaping-pole into the gravel of the road, I cleared the hedge at a bound, without leaving a single trace of my course, and took my way across the fields in pursuit of Campbell.

"For some time no steps were discernible, for my route lay over grass on which the rain was still incessantly falling. At last indications of a footmark encouraged me, and I continued to track it, sometimes readily, sometimes with difficulty, for it frequently disappeared, until it led me to the very edge of the flood. The man, whoever he was, must have plunged right through the waters. Perhaps he had been carried away. But there was no time for guessing; so feeling my way with my pole, I took to the water myself. To my surprise it was shallow enough for awhile, scarcely reaching above my knees. I got on, therefore, readily enough till I had arrived within a few yards of the wood, the object of my labours, when the land suddenly dipped, and I found myself in upwards of four feet of water. A few more steps would, I knew, place me on dry ground: so I strained onwards across the current, which now ran with considerable force, and after a struggle or two reached the skirts of the wood in safety.

"I had just caught hold of some long grass to secure my footing, when my attention was arrested by a noise at some distance. I threw myself on the bank for a single minute's rest, and heard distinctly the withered leaves and brambles crackling under a heavy tread, and the hoarse thick breathing of some creature apparently in the last stage of exhaustion. The horrid guttural sounds which it gave out in its pain (I heard them at the distance of a hundred yards) ring in my ears to this moment. I remembered to have heard that in Indian or African hunts the enormous beasts which they pursue will sometimes thus breathe out their distress before they stand at bay and die. But no such creature could be here—so I determined to follow. After a few steps I called out, 'Who goes?' All was still in an instant.

"My way now lay across the middle of the wood to the dingle, where I hoped to find my friend. In my course I had to pass by a deep hollow, which was usually filled with water, and which was the haunt of the water-rat, the lizard, and the frog, who kept their court among the flags and rushes there. I had reached this place, and was passing on, when a slight noise induced me to turn my head. The sound was like the cocking of a pistol; so I made haste to proclaim myself. 'It

is I—'tis Walter Bethel ! ' called I out lustily. The words were scarcely out of my mouth when uprose, from amidst the rushes and the green stagnant water, a phantom more hideous than Triton or Nereus in his most terrible mood. Covered to the chin with the green mantle of the pool, his clothes soaked and saturated with water, arose—with a cocked pistol in each hand, and a mouth wide open and gasping for breath—my father-in-law, Campbell ! He stared like a man bewildered.

" ' Well ? ' said he at last : ' twas all he could say.

" ' I am come to save you,' replied I ; ' the soldiers will be here in a few minutes. Come along with me.'

" ' No,' replied the other ; ' I'll go no farther. I *can* go no farther. I may as well die here.'

" ' By Heaven ! ' said I, ' you shall *not* die. Rebel or not, you are Mary Campbell's father, and while I have a sinew left, you shall not be taken.'

" With that I took him upon my back (for I was a lusty fellow then), and carried him—I know not how, but by several efforts I believe—to the extreme side of the wood. I was just congratulating myself on my success, when suddenly I heard the measured tramp of soldiers coming along a lane which wound round the skirts of the copse. I had mistaken the way. I stopped immediately, and heard the word ' Halt ! ' uttered in a tone that struck to my heart.

" ' They are upon us,' whispered Campbell, ' and the only thing is to die boldly ! Go, therefore, my dear Walter ; and may God bless you ! Tell poor Mary——,' but here his voice faltered, and he could only sigh out deeply, ' God bless my dear child ! '

" There was no time for talking, as you will imagine. I therefore motioned him to silence, and drew him, with the least possible noise, away from the point of danger. He was now able to walk slowly ; and that was fortunately sufficient, for the soldiers had stopped to deliberate. We kept on at a steady quiet pace along a sharp angle of the wood, which terminated at a point near the Bath road. Behind us, the voices of the soldiers were occasionally heard ; and once the report of a musket-shot a little disturbed our tranquillity. We succeeded, however, in attaining the extreme point of the wood, and were just about to emerge into the road, when a heavy plunge was heard near us, like that of a person jumping from an eminence, and the whistle of a pistol-bullet through the leaves, which quickly followed, reduced us to instant silence.

"Without uttering a syllable I pulled Campbell down beside me, amongst the fern and rank grass that grew all about, and there lay for two or three dreadful minutes, till our enemy had passed onwards. I had flung Campbell so completely prostrate that, he averred, he was obliged to make no inconsiderable meal of fern and dock leaves before he could breathe with comfort. However this was, we soon rose up, as soon as prudently we could do so—contrived to drop a fragment of Campbell's dress on the Chippenham road, and after seeing our pursuers take the bait and proceed southwards, we turned our backs upon danger and the detachment, and reached Hilmarton in safety."

To take up the conclusion of the tale, the latter part of which has been told in the words of Walter Bethel.

Campbell was saved. A little time sufficed, as my grandfather had predicted, to put an end to the hanging of the Jacobites. General Bethel, a firm and loyal friend of the existing government, was won over, after some entreaty, to petition for the pardon of Campbell; for he was one who had been excepted out of the list of those forgiven.

"He is a flaming, furious Jacobite," said General Bethel to his favourite, Walter, in reply to his request; "a troublesome fellow is he, Walter, and deserves to suffer."

"He is Mary's father, my dear uncle," said my grandfather, insinuatingly.

"You are a fool, Walter," replied the general tartly. "At *your* age you ought to be marching at the head of a file of grenadiers, instead of toying and making love, and—Pshaw! I am ashamed of you."

"But, my dear uncle——," Walter was proceeding in extenuation.

"Why don't you come up to town, sir?" inquired the general, with some sternness; "I have no doubt but that I can get you a commission in a couple of months, and a company—before you deserve one."

"My dear general," said his nephew once more, calmly, "I thank you for the interest that you take in me; but *my* ambition is for the toga—the gown! I am for civil, while you are for military fame. In the former, perhaps, I may become the first of my house; but in the latter I must for ever remain eclipsed by *your* greater reputation."

"You are a goose, Walter," replied his uncle, laughing, and pinched his ear;—and Walter laughed merrily too, for by that compliment Campbell obtained his pardon.

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

1784-1842

THE HAUNTED SHIPS

ALONG the sea of Solway, romantic on the Scottish side, with its woodland, its bays, its cliffs, and headlands ; and interesting on the English side, with its many beautiful towns with their shadows on the water, rich pastures, safe harbours, and numerous ships ; there still linger many traditional stories of a maritime nature, most of them connected with superstitions singularly wild and unusual. To the curious these tales afford a rich fund of entertainment, from the many diversities of the same story ; some dry and barren, and stripped of all the embellishments of poetry ; others dressed out in all the riches of a superstitious belief and haunted imagination.

In this they resemble the inland traditions of the peasants ; but many of the oral treasures of the Galwegian or the Cumbrian coast have the stamp of the Dane and the Norseman upon them, and claim but a remote or faint affinity with the legitimate legends of Caledonia. Something like a rude prosaic outline of several of the most noted of the northern ballads, the adventures and depredations of the old ocean kings, still lends life to the evening tale ; and, among others, the story of the Haunted Ships is still popular among the maritime peasantry.

One fine harvest evening, I went on board the shallop of Richard Faulder, of Allanbay ; and, committing ourselves to the waters, we allowed a gentle wind from the east to waft us at its pleasure towards the Scottish coast. We passed the sharp promontory of Siddick ; and skirting the land within a stonecast, glided along the shore till we came within sight of the ruined Abbey of Sweetheart. The green mountain of Criffel ascended beside us ; and the bleat of the flocks from its summit, together with the winding of the evening horn of the reapers, came softened into something like music over land and sea.

We pushed our shallop into a deep and wooded bay, and sat silently looking on the serene beauty of the place. The moon glimmered in her rising through the tall shafts of the pines of Caerlaverock ; and the sky, with scarce a cloud, showered down on wood and headland and

bay, the twinkling beams of a thousand stars rendering every object visible. The tide, too, was coming with that swift and silent swell observable when the wind is gentle ; the woody curves along the land were filling with the flood, till it touched the green branches of the drooping trees ; while in the centre current the roll and the plunge of a thousand pellocks told to the experienced fisherman that salmon were abundant.

As we looked, we saw an old man emerging from a path that winded to the shore through a grove of doddered hazel ; he carried a halve-net on his back, while behind him came a girl, bearing a small harpoon with which the fishers are remarkably dexterous in striking their prey. The senior seated himself on a large grey stone, which overlooked the bay, laid aside his bonnet, and submitted his bosom and neck to the refreshing sea breeze ; and taking his harpoon from his attendant, sat with the gravity and composure of a spirit of the flood, with his ministering nymph behind him. We pushed our shallop to the shore, and soon stood at their side.

“ This is old Mark Macmoran the mariner, with his granddaughter Barbara,” said Richard Faulder, in a whisper that had something of fear in it ; “ he knows every creek and cavern and quicksand in Solway—has seen the Spectre Hound that haunts the Isle of Man ; has heard him bark, and at every bark has seen a ship sink ; and he has seen, too, the Haunted Ships in full sail ; and, if all tales be true, he has sailed in them himself ;—he’s an awful person.”

Though I perceived in the communication of my friend something of the superstition of the sailor, I could not help thinking that common rumour had made a happy choice in singling out old Mark to maintain her intercourse with the invisible world. His hair, which seemed to have refused all intercourse with the comb, hung matted upon his shoulders ; a kind of mantle, or rather blanket, pinned with a wooden skewer round his neck, fell mid-leg down, concealing all his nether garments as far as a pair of hose, darned with yarn of all conceivable colours, and a pair of shoes, patched and repaired till nothing of the original structure remained, and clasped on his feet with two massy silver buckles.

If the dress of the old man was rude and sordid, that of his granddaughter was gay, and even rich. She wore a bodice of fine wool, wrought round the bosom with alternate leaf and lily, and a kirtle of the same fabric, which, almost touching her white and delicate

ankle, showed her snowy feet, so fairy-light and round that they scarcely seemed to touch the grass where she stood. Her hair, a natural ornament which woman seeks much to improve, was of bright glossy brown, and encumbered rather than adorned with a snood, set thick with marine productions, among which the small clear pearl found in the Solway was conspicuous.

Nature had not trusted to a handsome shape and a sylph-like air, for young Barbara's influence over the heart of man ; but had bestowed a pair of large bright blue eyes, swimming in liquid light, so full of love and gentleness and joy, that all the sailors from Annanwater to far Saint Bees acknowledged their power, and sung songs about the bonnie lass of Mark Macmoran. She stood holding a small gaff-hook of polished steel in her hand, and seemed not dissatisfied with the glances I bestowed on her from time to time, and which I held more than requited by a single glance of those eyes which retained so many capricious hearts in subjection.

The tide, though rapidly augmenting, had not yet filled the bay at our feet. The moon now streamed fairly over the tops of Caerlaverock pines, and showed the expanse of ocean dimpling and swelling, on which sloops and shallops came dancing, and displaying at every turn their extent of white sail against the beam of the moon. I looked on old Mark the mariner, who, seated motionless on his grey stone, kept his eye fixed on the increasing waters with a look of seriousness and sorrow in which I saw little of the calculating spirit of a mere fisherman. Though he looked on the coming tide, his eyes seemed to dwell particularly on the black and decayed hulls of two vessels, which, half immersed in the quicksand, still addressed to every heart a tale of shipwreck and desolation. The tide wheeled and foamed around them ; and, creeping inch by inch up the side, at last fairly threw its waters over the top, and a long and hollow eddy showed the resistance which the liquid element received.

The moment they were fairly buried in the water, the old man clasped his hands together, and said :

" Blessed be the tide that will break over and bury ye for ever ! Sad to mariners, and sorrowful to maids and mothers, has the time been you have choked up this deep and bonnie bay. For evil were you sent, and for evil have you continued. Every season finds from you its song of sorrow and wail, its funeral processions, and its shrouded corpses. Woe to the land where the wood grew that made ye ! Cursed

be the axe that hewed ye on the mountains, the hands that joined ye together, the bay that ye first swam in, and the wind that wafted ye here ! Seven times have ye put my life in peril, three fair sons have ye swept from my side, and two bonnie grand-bairns ; and now, even now, your waters foam and flash for my destruction, did I venture my infirm limbs in quest of food in your deadly bay. I see by that ripple and that foam, and hear by the sound and singing of your surge, that ye yearn for another victim ; but it shall not be me nor mine."

Even as the old mariner addressed himself to the wrecked ships, a young man appeared at the southern extremity of the bay, holding his halve-net in his hand, and hastening into the current. Mark rose and shouted, and waved him back from a place which, to a person unacquainted with the dangers of the bay, real and superstitious, seemed sufficiently perilous : his granddaughter, too, added her voice to his, and waved her white hands ; but the more they strove, the faster advanced the peasant, till he stood to his middle in the water, while the tide increased every moment in depth and strength.

" Andrew, Andrew," cried the young woman, in a voice quavering with emotion, " turn, turn, I tell you ! O the Ships, the Haunted Ships ! "

But the appearance of a fine run of fish had more influence with the peasant than the voice of bonnie Barbara, and forward he dashed, net in hand. In a moment he was borne off his feet, and mingled like foam with the water, and hurried towards the fatal eddies which whirled and roared round the sunken ships. But he was a powerful young man, and an expert swimmer : he seized on one of the projecting ribs of the nearest hulk, and clinging to it with the grasp of despair, uttered yell after yell, sustaining himself against the prodigious rush of the current.

From a shealing of turf and straw, within the pitch of a bar from the spot where we stood, came out an old woman bent with age, and leaning on a crutch.

" I heard the voice of that lad Andrew Lammie ; can the chield be drowning, that he skirls sae uncannilie ? " said the old woman, seating herself on the ground, and looking earnestly at the water. " Ou ay," she continued, " he's doomed, he's doomed ; heart and hand can never save him ; boats, ropes, and man's strength and wit, all vain ! vain !—he's doomed, he's doomed ! "

By this time I had thrown myself into the shallop, followed reluct-

antly by Richard Faulder, over whose courage and kindness of heart superstition had great power ; and with one push from the shore, and some exertion in sculling, we came within a quoitcast of the unfortunate fisherman. He stayed not to profit by our aid ; for, when he perceived us near, he uttered a piercing shriek of joy, and bounded towards us through the agitated element the full length of an oar. I saw him for a second on the surface of the water ; but the eddy current sucked him down ; and all I ever beheld of him again was his hand held above the flood, and clutching in agony at some imaginary aid.

I sat gazing in horror on the vacant sea before us ; but a breathing-time before, a human being, full of youth and strength and hope, was there : his cries were still ringing in my ears, and echoing in the woods ; and now nothing was seen or heard save the turbulent expanse of water, and the sound of its chafing on the shores. We pushed back our shallop, and resumed our station on the cliff beside the old mariner and his descendant.

" Wherefor sought ye to peril your own lives fruitlessly," said Mark, " in attempting to save the doomed ? Whoso touches those infernal ships, never survives to tell the tale. Woe to the man who is found nigh them at midnight when the tide has subsided, and they arise in their former beauty, with forecastle, and deck, and sail, and pennon, and shroud ! Then is seen the streaming of lights along the water from their cabin windows, and then is heard the sound of mirth, the clamour of tongues, and the infernal whoop and halloo, and song, ringing far and wide. Woe to the man who comes nigh them ! "

To all this my Allanbay companion listened with a breathless attention. I felt something touched with a superstition to which I partly believed I had seen one victim offered up ; and I inquired of the old mariner, " How and when came these Haunted Ships there ? To me they seem but the melancholy relics of some unhappy voyagers, and much more likely to warn people to shun destruction than entice and delude them to it."

" And so," said the old man with a smile, which had more of sorrow in it than of mirth ; " and so, young man, these black and shattered hulks seem to the eye of the multitude. But things are not what they seem : that water, a kind and convenient servant to the wants of man, which seems so smooth and so dimpling and so gentle, has swallowed up a human soul even now ; and the place which it covers, so fair and so level, is a faithless quicksand, out of which none escape. Things are

otherwise than they seem. Had you lived as long as I have had the sorrow to live ; had you seen the storms, and braved the perils, and endured the distresses which have befallen me ; had you sat gazing out on the dreary ocean at midnight on a haunted coast ; had you seen comrade after comrade, brother after brother, and son after son, swept away by the merciless ocean from your very side ; had you seen the shapes of friends, doomed to the wave and the quicksand, appearing to you in the dreams and visions of the night ; then would your mind have been prepared for crediting the maritime legends of mariners ; and the two haunted Danish ships would have had their terrors for you, as they have for all who sojourn on this coast.

“ Of the time and the cause of their destruction,” continued the old man, “ I know nothing certain : they have stood as you have seen them for uncounted time ; and while all other ships wrecked on this unhappy coast have gone to pieces, and rotted and sunk away in a few years, these two haunted hulks have neither sunk in the quicksand, nor has a single spar or board been displaced. Maritime legend says, that two ships of Denmark having had permission, for a time, to work deeds of darkness and dolour on the deep, were at last condemned to the whirlpool and the sunken rock, and were wrecked in this bonnie bay, as a sign to seamen to be gentle and devout. The night when they were lost was a harvest evening of uncommon mildness and beauty : the sun had newly set ; the moon came brighter and brighter out ; and the reapers, laying their sickles at the root of the standing corn, stood looking at the increasing magnitude of the waters, for sea and land were visible from Saint Bees to Barnhourie.

“ The sails of two vessels were soon seen bent for the Scottish coast ; and, with a speed outrunning the swiftest ship, they approached the dangerous quicksands and headland of Borranpoint. On the deck of the foremost ship not a living soul was seen, or shape, unless something in darkness and form resembling a human shadow could be called a shape, which flitted from extremity to extremity of the ship, with the appearance of trimming the sails, and directing the vessel’s course. But the decks of its companion were crowded with human shapes ; the captain and mate, and sailor and cabin-boy, all seemed there ; and from them the sound of mirth and minstrelsy echoed over land and water. The coast which they skirted along was one of extreme danger, and the reapers shouted to warn them to beware of sandbank and rock ; but of this friendly counsel no notice was taken,

except that a large and famished dog, which sat on the prow, answered every shout with a long, loud, and melancholy howl. The deep sandbank of Carsethorn was expected to arrest the career of these desperate navigators ; but they passed, with the celerity of water-fowl, over an obstruction which had wrecked many pretty ships.

“ Old men shook their heads and departed, saying, ‘ We have seen the fiend sailing in a bottomless ship ; let us go home and pray ’ ; but one young and wilful man said, ‘ Fiend ! I’ll warrant it’s nae fiend, but douce Janet Withershins the witch, holding a carouse with some of her Cumberland cummers, and mickle red wine will be spilt atween them. Dod I would gladly have a toothfu’ ! I’ll warrant it’s nane o’ your cauld sour slae-water like a bottle of Bailie Skrinkie’s port, but right drap-o’-my-heart’s-blood stuff, that would waken a body out of their last linen. I wonder where the cummers will anchor their craft ? ’ ‘ And I’ll vow,’ said another rustic, ‘ the wine they quaff is none of your visionary drink, such as a drouthie body has dished out to his lips in a dream ; nor is it shadowy and unsubstantial, like the vessels they sail in, which are made out of a cockel-shell or a cast-off slipper, or the paring of a seaman’s right thumb-nail. I once got a hansel out of a witch’s quaigh myself—auld Marion Mathers, of Dustie-foot, whom they tried to bury in the old kirkyard of Dunscore ; but the cummer raise as fast as they laid her down, and naewhere else would she lie but in the bonnie green kirkyard of Kier, among douce and sponsible fowk. So I’ll vow that the wine of a witch’s cup is as fell liquor as ever did a kindly turn to a poor man’s heart ; and be they fiends, or be they witches, if they have red wine asteer, I’ll risk a drouket sark for ae glorious tout on’t.’ ‘ Silence, ye sinners,’ said the minister’s son of a neighbouring parish, who united in his own person his father’s lack of devotion with his mother’s love of liquor. ‘ Whist !—speak as if ye had the fear of something holy before ye. Let the vessels run their own way to destruction : who can stay the eastern wind, and the current of the Solway sea ? I can find ye Scripture warrant for that ; so let them try their strength on Blawhooly rocks, and their might on the broad quicksand. There’s a surf running there would knock the ribs together of a galley built by the imps of the pit, and commanded by the Prince of Darkness. Bonnie and bravely they sail away there, but before the blast blows by they’ll be wrecked ; and red wine and strong brandy will be as rife as dyke water, and we’ll drink the health of bonnie Bell Blackness out of her left-foot slipper.’

"The speech of the young profligate was applauded by several of his companions, and away they flew to the bay of Blawhooly, from whence they never returned. The two vessels were observed all at once to stop in the bosom of the bay, on the spot where their hulls now appear ; the mirth and the minstrelsy waxed louder than ever, and the forms of maidens, with instruments of music and wine-cups in their hands, thronged the decks. A boat was lowered ; and the same shadowy pilot who conducted the ships made it start towards the shore with the rapidity of lightning, and its head knocked against the bank where the four young men stood who longed for the unblest drink. They leaped in with a laugh, and with a laugh were they welcomed on deck ; wine-cups were given to each, and as they raised them to their lips the vessels melted away beneath their feet ; and one loud shriek, mingled with laughter still louder, was heard over land and water for many miles. Nothing more was heard or seen till the morning, when the crowd who came to the beach saw with fear and wonder the two Haunted Ships, such as they now seem, masts and tackle gone ; nor mark, nor sign, by which their name, country, or destination could be known, was left remaining. Such is the tradition of the mariners ; and its truth has been attested by many whose sons and whose fathers have been drowned in the haunted bay of Blawhooly."

"And trow ye," said the old woman, who, attracted from her hut by the drowning cries of the young fisherman, had remained an auditor of the mariner's legend ; "and trow ye, Mark Macmoran, that the tale of the Haunted Ships is done ? I can say no to that. Mickle have mine ears heard ; but more mine eyes have witnessed since I came to dwell in this humble home by the side of the deep sea. I mind the night weel : it was on Hallowmass Eve : the nuts were cracked, and the apples were eaten, and spell and charm were tried at my fireside ; till, wearied with diving into the dark waves of futurity, the lads and lasses fairly took to the more visible blessings of kind words, tender clasps, and gentle courtship. Soft words in a maiden's ear, and a kindlie kiss o' her lip, were old world matters to me, Mark Macmoran ; though I mean not to say that I have been free of the folly of dauning and daffin with a youth in my day, and keeping tryste with him in dark and lonely places."

"However, as I say, these times of enjoyment were passed and gone with me—the mair's the pity that pleasure should fly sae fast away—and as I could nae make sport I thought I should not mar any ;

so out I sauntered into the fresh cold air, and sat down behind that old oak, and looked abroad on the wide sea. I had my ain sad thoughts, ye may think, at the time ; it was in that very bay my blythe good man perished, with seven more in his company ; and on that very bank where ye see the waves leaping and foaming, I saw seven stately corpses streaked, but the dearest was the eighth. It was a woeful sight to me, a widow, with four bonnie boys, with nought to support them but these twa hands, and God's blessing, and a cow's grass. I have never liked to live out of sight of this bay since that time ; and mony's the moonlight night I sit looking on these watery mountains, and these waste shores ; it does my heart good, whatever it may do to my head. So ye see it was Hallowmass Night, and looking on sea and land sat I ; and my heart wandering to other thoughts soon made me forget my youthful company at hame. It might be near the howe hour of the night. The tide was making, and its singing brought strange old world stories with it, and I thought on the dangers that sailors endure, the fates they meet with, and the fearful forms they see. My own blythe good man had seen sights that made him grave enough at times, though he aye tried to laugh them away.

" Aweel, atween that very rock aneath us and the coming tide, I saw, or thought I saw—for the tale is so dreamlike, that the whole might pass for a vision of the night—I saw the form of a man : his plaid was grey, his face was grey ; and his hair, which hung low down till it nearly came to the middle of his back, was as white as the white sea-foam. He began to howk and dig under the bank ; an' God be near me, thought I, this maun be the unblessed spirit of auld Adam Gowdgowpin the miser, who is doomed to dig for shipwrecked treasure, and count how many millions are hidden for ever from man's enjoyment. The form found something which in shape and hue seemed a left-foot slipper of brass ; so down to the tide he marched, and placing it on the water, whirled it thrice round, and the infernal slipper dilated at every turn, till it became a bonnie barge with its sails bent, and on board leaped the form, and scudded swiftly away. He came to one of the Haunted Ships, and striking it with his oar, a fair ship, with mast and canvas and mariners, started up ; he touched the other Haunted Ship, and produced the like transformation ; and away the three spectre ships bounded, leaving a track of fire behind them on the billows which was long unextinguished. Now was nae that a bonnie and a fearful sight to see beneath the light of the Hallowmass moon ?

“ But the tale is far frae finished, for mariners say that once a year, on a certain night, if ye stand on the Borran Point, ye will see the infernal shallops coming snoring through the Solway, ye will hear the same laugh and song and mirth and minstrelsy which our ancestors heard; see them bound over the sandbanks and sunken rocks like sea-gulls, cast their anchor in Blawhooly Bay, while the shadowy figure lowers down the boat, and augments their numbers with the four unhappy mortals to whose memory a stone stands in the kirkyard, with a sinking ship and a shoreless sea cut upon it. Then the spectre ships vanish, and the drowning shriek of mortals and the rejoicing laugh of fiends are heard, and the old hulls are left as a memorial that the old spiritual kingdom has not departed from the earth. But I maun away, and trim my little cottage fire, and make it burn and blaze up bonnie, to warm the crickets and my cold and crazy bones, that maun soon be laid aneath the green sod in the eerie kirkyard.”

And away the old dame tottered to her cottage, secured the door on the inside, and soon the hearth-flame was seen to glimmer and gleam through the keyhole and window.

“ I’ll tell ye what,” said the old mariner, in a subdued tone, and with a shrewd and suspicious glance of his eye after the old sibyl, “ it’s a word that may not very well be uttered, but there are many mistakes made in evening stories if old Moll Moray there, where she lives, knows not mickle more than she is willing to tell of the Haunted Ships, and their unhallowed mariners. She lives cannilie and quietly; no one knows how she is fed or supported; but her dress is aye whole, her cottage ever smokes, and her table lacks neither of wine, white and red, nor of fowl and fish, and white bread and brown. It was a dear scoff to Jock Matheson, when he called old Moll the uncannie carline of Blawhooly: his boat ran round and round in the centre of the Solway—everybody said it was enchanted—and down it went head foremost: and had nae Jock been a swimmer equal to a sheldrake, he would have fed the fish. But I’ll warrant it sobered the lad’s speech; and he never reckoned himself safe till he made auld Moll the present of a new kirtle and a stone of cheese.”

“ O father,” said his granddaughter Barbara, “ ye surely wrong poor old Mary Moray: what use could it be to an old woman like her, who has no wrongs to redress, no malice to work out against mankind, and nothing to seek of enjoyment save a cannie hour and a quiet grave—what use could the fellowship of fiends and the communion of evil

spirits be to her ? I know Jenny Primrose puts rowan-tree above the door-head when she sees old Mary coming ; I know the good wife of Kittlenaket wears rowan-berry leaves in the headband of her blue kirtle, and all for the sake of averting the unsonsie glance of Mary's right ee ; and I know that the auld Laird of Burntroutwater drives his seven cows to their pasture with a wand of witch-tree, to keep Mary from milking them. But what has all that to do with haunted shallows, visionary mariners, and bottomless boats ? I have heard myself as pleasant a tale about the Haunted Ships and their unworldly crews, as any one would wish to hear in a winter evening. It was told me by young Benjie Macharg, one summer night, sitting on Arbiglandbank : the lad intended a sort of love meeting ; but all that he could talk of was about smearing sheep and shearing sheep, and of the wife which the Norway elves of the Haunted Ships made for his uncle Sandie Macharg. And I shall tell ye the tale as the honest lad told it to me.

“ Alexander Macharg, besides being the laird of three acres of peatmoss, two kale gardens, and the owner of seven good milch cows, a pair of horses, and six pet sheep, was the husband of one of the handsomest women in seven parishes. Many a lad sighed the day he was bridged ; and a Nithsdale laird and two Annandale moorland farmers drank themselves to their last linen, as well as their last shilling, through sorrow for her loss. But married was the dame ; and home she was carried, to bear rule over her home and her husband, as an honest woman should.

“ Now ye maun ken that though the flesh and blood lovers of Alexander's bonnie wife all ceased to love and to sue her after she became another's, there were certain admirers who did not consider their claim at all abated, or their hopes lessened by the kirk's famous obstacle of matrimony. Ye have heard how the devout minister of Tinwald had a fair son carried away, and bedded against his liking to an unchristened bride, whom the elves and the fairies provided : ye have heard how the bonnie bride of the drunken Laird of Soukitup was stolen by the fairies out at the back-window of the bridal chamber, the time the bridegroom was groping his way to the chamber-door ; and ye have heard—but why need I multiply cases ? Such things in the ancient days were as common as candle-light. So ye'll no hinder certain water elves and sea fairies, who sometimes keep festival and summer mirth in these old haunted hulks, from falling in love with the weel-faured wife of Laird Macharg ; and to their plots and contrivances they went how they might accomplish to sunder man and wife ; and

sundering such a man and such a wife was like sundering the green leaf from the summer, or the fragrance from the flower.

“ So it fell on a time that Laird Macharg took his halvenet on his back, and his steel spear in his hand, and down to Blawhooly Bay gade he, and into the water he went right between the two haunted hulks, and placing his net awaited the coming of the tide. The night, ye maun ken, was mirk, and the wind lowne, and the singing of the increasing waters among the shells and the pebbles was heard for sundry miles. All at once light began to glance and twinkle on board the two Haunted Ships from every hole and seam, and presently the sound as of a hatchet employed in squaring timber echoed far and wide. But if the toil of these unearthly workmen amazed the laird, how much more was his amazement increased when a sharp shrill voice called out, ‘ Ho ! brother, what are you doing now ? ’ A voice still shriller responded from the other haunted ship, ‘ I’m making a wife to Sandie Macharg ! ’ And a loud quavering laugh running from ship to ship, and from bank to bank, told the joy they expected from their labour.

“ Now the laird, besides being a devout and a God-fearing man, was shrewd and bold ; and in plot and contrivance, and skill in conducting his designs, was fairly an overmatch for any dozen land elves : but the water elves are far more subtle ; besides, their haunts and their dwellings being in the great deep, pursuit and detection is hopeless if they succeed in carrying their prey to the waves. But ye shall hear. Home flew the laird, collected his family around the hearth, spoke of the signs and the sins of the times, and talked of mortification and prayer for averting calamity ; and finally, taking his father’s Bible, brass clasps, black print, and covered with calf-skin, from the shelf, he proceeded without let or stint to perform domestic worship. I should have told ye that he bolted and locked the door, shut up all inlet to the house, threw salt into the fire, and proceeded in every way like a man skilful in guarding against the plots of fairies and fiends. His wife looked on all this with wonder ; but she saw something in her husband’s looks that hindered her from intruding either question or advice, and a wise woman was she.

“ Near the mid-hour of the night the rush of a horse’s feet was heard, and the sound of a rider leaping from its back, and a heavy knock came to the door, accompanied by a voice, saying, ‘ The cummer drink’s hot, and the knave bairn is expected at Laird Laurie’s to-night ; sae mount, good-wife, and come.’

“ ‘ Preserve me ! ’ said the wife of Sandie Macharg ; ‘ that’s news indeed ! who could have thought it ? The laird has been heirless for seventeen years ! Now Sandie, my man, fetch me my skirt and hood.’

“ But he laid his arm round his wife’s neck, and said, ‘ If all the lairds in Galloway go heirless, over this door threshold shall you not stir to-night ; and I have said, and I have sworn it : seek not to know why or wherefor—but, Lord, send us thy blessed mornlight.’ The wife looked for a moment in her husband’s eyes, and desisted from further entreaty.

“ ‘ But let us send a civil message to the gossips, Sandy ; and hadnae ye better say I am sair laid with a sudden sickness ?—though it’s sinful-like to send the poor messenger a mile agate with a lie in his mouth without a glass of brandy.’

“ ‘ To such a messenger, and to those who sent him, no apology is needed,’ said the austere laird ; ‘ so let him depart.’ And the clatter of a horse’s hoofs was heard, and the muttered imprecations of its rider on the churlish treatment he had experienced.

“ ‘ Now, Sandie, my lad,’ said his wife, laying an arm particularly white and round about his neck as she spoke, ‘ are you not a queer man and a stern ? I have been your wedded wife now these three years ; and, beside my dower, have brought you three as bonnie bairns as ever smiled aneath a summer sun. O man, you a douce man, and fitter to be an elder than even Willie Greer himself, I have the minister’s ain word for’t, to put on these hard-hearted looks, and gang waving your arms that way, as if ye said, “ I winna take the counsel of sic a hempie as you ” ; I’m your ain leal wife, and will and maun have an explanation.’

“ To all this Sandie Macharg replied, ‘ It is written—“ Wives, obey your husbands ” ; but we have been stayed in our devotion, so let us pray ’ ; and down he knelt : his wife knelt also, for she was as devout as bonnie ; and beside them knelt their household, and all lights were extinguished.

“ ‘ Now this beats a,’ ’ muttered his wife to herself ; ‘ however, I shall be obedient for a time ; but if I dinna ken what all this is for before the morn by sunket-time, my tongue is nae langer a tongue, nor my hands worth wearing.’

“ The voice of her husband in prayer interrupted this mental soliloquy ; and ardently did he beseech to be preserved from the wiles of the fiends and the snares of Satan ; ‘ from witches, ghosts, goblins, elves, fairies, spunkies, and water-kelpies ; from the spectre shallop

of Solway ; from spirits visible and invisible ; from the Haunted Ships and their unearthly tenants ; from maritime spirits that plotted against godly men, and fell in love with their wives——'

" ' Nay, but His presence be near us ! ' said his wife in a low tone of dismay. ' God guide my gudeman's wits : I never heard such a prayer from human lips before. But Sandie, my man, Lord's sake, rise. What fearful light is this ? Barn and byre and stable maun be in a blaze ; and Hawkie, and Hurley, Doddie, and Cherrie, and Damson-plum will be smoored with reek, and scorched with flame.'

" And a flood of light, but not so gross as a common fire, which ascended to heaven and filled all the court before the house, amply justified the good wife's suspicions. But to the terrors of fire Sandie was as immovable as he was to the imaginary groans of the barren wife of Laird Laurie ; and he held his wife, and threatened the weight of his right hand—and it was a heavy one—to all who ventured abroad, or even unbolted the door. The neighing and prancing of horses, and the bellowing of cows, augmented the horrors of the night ; and to any one who only heard the din, it seemed that the whole onstead was in a blaze, and horses and cattle perishing in the flame. All wiles, common or extraordinary, were put in practice to entice or force the honest farmer and his wife to open the door ; and when the like success attended every new stratagem, silence for a little while ensued, and a long, loud, and shrilling laugh wound up the dramatic efforts of the night.

" In the morning, when Laird Macharg went to the door, he found standing against one of the pilasters a piece of black ship oak, rudely fashioned into something like human form, and which skilful people declared would have been clothed with seeming flesh and blood, and palmed upon him by elfin adroitness for his wife, had he admitted his visitants. A synod of wise men and women sat upon the woman of timber, and she was finally ordered to be devoured by fire, and that in the open air. A fire was soon made, and into it the elfin sculpture was tossed from the prongs of two pairs of pitchforks. The blaze that arose was awful to behold ; and hissings and burstings and loud cracklings and strange noises were heard in the midst of the flame ; and when the whole sank into ashes, a drinking-cup of some precious metal was found ; and this cup, fashioned no doubt by elfin skill, but rendered harmless by the purification with fire, the sons and daughters of Sandie Macharg and his wife drink out of to this very day. Bless all bold men, say I, and obedient wives ! "

CHRISTOPHER NORTH

(JOHN WILSON)

1785-1854

MOSS-SIDE

GILBERT AINSLIE was a poor man ; and he had been a poor man all the days of his life, which were not few, for his thin hair was now waxing grey. He had been born and bred on the small moorland farm which he now occupied ; and he hoped to die there, as his father and grandfather had done before him, leaving a family just above the more bitter wants of this world. Labour, hard and unremitting, had been his lot in life ; but although sometimes severely tried, he had never repined ; and through all the mist and gloom, and even the storms, that had assailed him, he had lived on from year to year in that calm and resigned contentment which unconsciously cheers the hearthstone of the blameless poor.

With his own hands he had ploughed, sowed, and reaped his often scanty harvest, assisted, as they grew up, by three sons, who, even in boyhood, were happy to work along with their father in the fields. Out of doors or in, Gilbert Ainslie was never idle. The spade, the shears, the plough-shaft, the sickle, and the flail, all came readily to hands that grasped them well ; and not a morsel of food was eaten under his roof, or a garment worn there, that was not honestly, severely, nobly earned.

Gilbert Ainslie was a slave, but it was for them he loved with a sober and deep affection. The thralldom under which he lived God had imposed, and it only served to give his character a shade of silent gravity, but not austere ; to make his smiles fewer, but more heartfelt ; to calm his soul at grace before and after meals ; and to kindle it in morning and evening prayer.

There is no need to tell the character of the wife of such a man. Meek and thoughtful, yet gladsome and gay withal, her heaven was in her house ; and her gentler and weaker hands helped to bar the door against want. Of ten children that had been born to them, they had lost three ; and as they had fed, clothed, and educated them respectably, so did they give them who died a respectable funeral. The living did not grudge to give up, for a while, some of their daily comforts,

for the sake of the dead ; and bought, with the little sums which their industry had saved, decent mournings, worn on Sabbath, and then carefully laid by. Of the seven that survived, two sons were farm-servants in the neighbourhood, while three daughters and two sons remained at home, growing, or grown up, a small, happy, hard-working household.

Many cottages are there in Scotland like Moss-side, and many such humble and virtuous cottagers as were now beneath its roof of straw. The eye of the passing traveller may mark them or mark them not, but they stand peacefully in thousands over all the land ; and most beautiful do they make it, through all its wide valleys and narrow glens,—its low holms encircled by the rocky walls of some bonnie burn,—its green mounts elated with their little crowning groves of plane-trees,—its yellow cornfields,—its bare pastoral hillsides, and all its heathy moors, on whose black bosom lie shining or concealed glades of excessive verdure, inhabited by flowers, and visited only by the far-flying bees.

Moss-side was not beautiful to a careless or hasty eye ; but when looked on and surveyed, it seemed a pleasant dwelling. Its roof, overgrown with grass and moss, was almost as green as the ground out of which its weather-stained walls appeared to grow. The moss behind it was separated from a little garden by a narrow slip of arable land, the dark colour of which showed that it had been won from the wild by patient industry, and by patient industry retained. It required a bright sunny day to make Moss-side fair ; but then it was fair indeed ; and when the little brown moorland birds were singing their short songs among the rushes and the heather, or a lark, perhaps, lured thither by some green barley-field for its undisturbed nest, rose ringing all over the enlivened solitude, the little bleak farm smiled like the paradise of poverty, sad and affecting in its lone and extreme simplicity.

The boys and girls had made some plots of flowers among the vegetables that the little garden supplied for their homely meals ; pinks and carnations, brought from walled gardens of rich men farther down in the cultivated strath, grew here with somewhat diminished lustre ; a bright show of tulips had a strange beauty in the midst of that moorland ; and the smell of roses mixed well with that of the clover—the beautiful fair clover, that loves the soil and the air of Scotland, and gives the rich and balmy milk to the poor man's lips.

In this cottage Gilbert's youngest child, a girl about nine years of

age, had been lying for a week in a fever. It was now Saturday evening, and the ninth day of the disease. Was she to live or die? It seemed as if a very few hours were between the innocent creature and heaven. All the symptoms were those of approaching death. The parents knew well the change that comes over the human face, whether it be in infancy, youth, or prime, just before the departure of the spirit ; and as they stood together by Margaret's bed, it seemed to them that the fatal shadow had fallen upon her features. The surgeon of the parish lived some miles distant, but they expected him now every moment, and many a wistful look was directed by tearful eyes along the moor.

The daughter who was out at service came anxiously home on this night, the only one that could be allowed her, for the poor must work in their grief, and their servants must do their duty to those whose bread they eat, even when nature is sick,—sick at heart. Another of the daughters came in from the potato-field beyond the brae, with what was to be their frugal supper. The calm noiseless spirit of life was in and around the house, while death seemed dealing with one who, a few days ago, was like light upon the floor, and the sound of music, that always breathed up when most wanted ; glad and joyous in common talk,—sweet, silvery, and mournful, when it joined in hymn or psalm.

One after the other they all continued going up to the bedside, and then coming away sobbing or silent, to see their merry little sister, who used to keep dancing all day like a butterfly in a meadow-field, or like a butterfly with shut wings on a flower, trifling for a while in the silence of her joy, now tossing restlessly on her bed, and scarcely sensible to the words of endearment whispered around her, or the kisses dropped with tears, in spite of themselves, on her burning forehead.

Utter poverty often kills the affections ; but a deep, constant, and common feeling of this world's hardships, and an equal participation in all those struggles by which they may be softened, unite husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, in thoughtful and subdued tenderness, making them happy indeed while the circle round the fire is unbroken, and yet preparing them every day to bear the separation, when some one or other is taken slowly or suddenly away. Their souls are not moved by fits and starts, although, indeed, nature sometimes will wrestle with necessity ; and there is a wise moderation,

both in the joy and the grief of the intelligent poor, which keeps lasting trouble away from their earthly lot, and prepares them silently and unconsciously for heaven.

"Do you think the child is dying?" said Gilbert with a calm voice to the surgeon, who, on his wearied horse, had just arrived from another sick-bed, over the misty range of hills; and had been looking steadfastly for some minutes on the little patient. The humane man knew the family well in the midst of whom he was standing, and replied:

"While there is life there is hope; but my pretty little Margaret is, I fear, in the last extremity."

There was no loud lamentation at these words—all had before known, though they would not confess it to themselves, what they now were told—and though the certainty that was in the words of the skilful man made their hearts beat for a little with sicker throbbings, made their pale faces paler, and brought out from some eyes a greater gush of tears, yet death had been before in this house, and in this case he came, as he always does, in awe, but not in terror. There were wandering and wavering and dreamy delirious phantasies in the brain of the innocent child; but the few words she indistinctly uttered were affecting, not rending to the heart, for it was plain that she thought herself herding her sheep in the green silent pastures, and sitting wrapped in her plaid upon the lown and sunny side of the Birk-knowe.

She was too much exhausted—there was too little life—too little breath in her heart, to frame a tune; but some of her words seemed to be from favourite old songs; and at last her mother wept, and turned aside her face, when the child, whose blue eyes were shut, and her lips almost still, breathed out these lines of the beautiful twenty-third psalm:

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

The child was now left with none but her mother by the bedside, for it was said to be best so; and Gilbert and his family sat down round the kitchen fire, for a while in silence. In about a quarter of an hour they began to rise calmly, and to go each to his allotted work. One of the daughters went forth with the pail to milk the cow, and

another began to set out the table in the middle of the floor for supper, covering it with a white cloth. Gilbert viewed the usual household arrangements with a solemn and untroubled eye ; and there was almost the faint light of a grateful smile on his cheek, as he said to the worthy surgeon, " You will partake of our fare after your day's travel and toil of humanity."

In a short silent half hour the potatoes and oatcakes, butter and milk, were on the board ; and Gilbert, lifting up his toil-hardened but manly hand, with a slow motion, at which the room was as hushed as if it had been empty, closed his eyes in reverence, and asked a blessing. There was a little stool, on which no one sat, by the old man's side. It had been put there unwittingly, when the other seats were all placed in their usual order ; but the golden head that was wont to rise at that part of the table was now wanting. There was silence—not a word was said—their meal was before them,—God had been thanked, and they began to eat.

While they were at their silent meal a horseman came galloping to the door, and, with a loud voice, called out that he had been sent express with a letter to Gilbert Ainslie ; at the same time rudely, and with an oath, demanding a dram for his trouble. The eldest son, a lad of eighteen, fiercely seized the bridle of his horse, and turned its head away from the door. The rider, somewhat alarmed at the flushed face of the powerful stripling, threw down the letter and rode off.

Gilbert took the letter from his son's hand, casting, at the same time, a half upbraiding look on his face, that was returning to its former colour.

" I feared,"— said the youth, with a tear in his eye,— " I feared that the brute's voice, and the trampling of the horse's feet, would have disturbed her."

Gilbert held the letter hesitatingly in his hand, as if afraid, at that moment, to read it ; at length he said aloud to the surgeon :

" You know that I am a poor man, and debt, if justly incurred, and punctually paid when due, is no dishonour."

Both his hand and his voice shook slightly as he spoke ; but he opened the letter from the lawyer, and read it in silence. At this moment his wife came from her child's bedside, and looking anxiously at her husband, told him " not to mind about the money, that no man who knew him would arrest his goods, or put him into prison, though,

dear me, it is cruel to be put to it thus, when our bairn is dying, and when, if so it be the Lord's will, she should have a decent burial, poor innocent, like them that went before her."

Gilbert continued reading the letter with a face on which no emotion could be discovered ; and then, folding it up, he gave it to his wife, told her she might read it if she chose, and then put it into his desk in the room, beside the poor dear bairn. She took it from him, without reading it, and crushed it into her bosom ; for she turned her ear towards her child, and, thinking she heard it stir, ran out hastily to its bedside.

Another hour of trial passed, and the child was still swimming for its life. The very dogs knew there was grief in the house, and lay without stirring, as if hiding themselves, below the long table at the window. One sister sat with an unfinished gown on her knees, that she had been sewing for the dear child, and still continued at the hopeless work, she scarcely knew why ; and often, often, putting up her hand to wipe away a tear.

" What is that ? " said the old man to his eldest daughter : " What is that you are laying on the shelf ? "

She could scarcely reply that it was a ribband and an ivory comb that she had brought for little Margaret, against the night of the dancing-school ball. And, at these words, the father could not restrain a long, deep, and bitter groan ; at which the boy nearest in age to his dying sister, looked up weeping in his face, and letting the tattered book of old ballads, which he had been poring on, but not reading, fall out of his hands, he rose from his seat, and, going into his father's bosom, kissed him ; for the heart of the boy was moved within him ; and the old man, as he embraced him, felt that, in his innocence and simplicity, he was indeed a comforter.

" The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," said the old man ; " blessed be the name of the Lord."

The outer door gently opened, and he whose presence had in former years brought peace and resignation hither, when their hearts had been tried, even as they now were tried, stood before them. On the night before the Sabbath the minister of Auchindown never left his manse, except, as now, to visit the sick or dying bed. Scarcely could Gilbert reply to his first question about his child, when the surgeon came from the bedroom and said :

" Margaret seems lifted up by God's hand above death and the

grave : I think she will recover. She has fallen asleep ; and when she wakes, I hope—I believe—that the danger will be past, and that your child will live."

They were all prepared for death ; but now they were found unprepared for life. One wept that had till then locked up all her tears within her heart ; another gave a short palpitating shriek ; and the tender-hearted Isobel, who had nursed the child when it was a baby, fainted away. The youngest brother gave way to gladsome smiles ; and, calling out his dog Hector, who used to sport with him and his little sister on the moor, he told the tidings to the dumb irrational creature, whose eyes, it is certain, sparkled with a sort of joy. The clock, for some days, had been prevented from striking the hours ; but the silent fingers pointed to the hour of nine ; and that, in the cottage of Gilbert Ainslie, was the stated hour of family worship. His own honoured minister took the book.

He waled a portion with judicious care,
And " Let us worship God ! " he said, with solemn air.

A chapter was read—a prayer said ;—and so, too, was sung a psalm, but it was sung low, and with suppressed voices, lest the child's saving sleep might be broken ; and now and then the female voices trembled, or some one of them ceased altogether ; for there had been tribulation and anguish, and now hope and faith were tried in the joy of thanksgiving.

The child still slept ; and its sleep seemed more sound and deep. It appeared almost certain that the crisis was over, and that the flower was not to fade.

" Children," said Gilbert, " our happiness is in the love we bear to one another ; and our duty is in submitting to and serving God. Gracious, indeed, has He been unto us. Is not the recovery of our little darling, dancing, singing Margaret, worth all the gold that ever was mined ? If we had had thousands of thousands, would we not have filled up her grave with the worthless dross of gold, rather than that she should have gone down there with her sweet face and all her rosy smiles ? "

There was no reply ; but a joyful sobbing all over the room.

" Never mind the letter, nor the debt, father," said the eldest daughter. " We have all some little thing of our own—a few pounds, and we shall be able to raise as much as will keep arrest and prison at a distance. Or if they do take our furniture out of the house, all

except Margaret's bed, who cares? We will sleep on the floor; and there are potatoes in the field, and clear water in the spring."

Gilbert went into the sickroom, and got the letter from his wife, who was sitting at the head of the bed, watching, with a heart blessed beyond all bliss, the calm and regular breathings of her child.

"This letter," said he mildly, "is not from a hard creditor. Come with me while I read it aloud to our children."

The letter was read aloud, and it was well fitted to diffuse pleasure and satisfaction through the dwelling of poverty. It was from an executor to the will of a distant relative, who had left Gilbert Ainslie £1500.

"The sum," said Gilbert Ainslie, "is a large one to folks like us, but not, I hope, large enough to turn our heads, or make us think ourselves all lords and ladies. It will do more, far more, than put me fairly above the world at last. I believe that with it I may buy this very farm, on which my forefathers have toiled. But God, whose providence has sent this temporal blessing, may He send us wisdom and prudence how to use it, and humble and grateful hearts to us all!"

"You will be able to send me to school all the year round now, father," said the youngest boy. "And you may leave the flail to your sons now, father," said the eldest. "You may hold the plough still, for you draw a straighter furrow than any of us; but hard work for young sinews; and you may sit now oftener in your arm-chair by the ingle. You will not need to rise now in the dark, cold, and snowy winter mornings, and keep threshing corn in the barn for hours by candle-light, before the late dawning."

There was silence, gladness, and sorrow, and but little sleep in Moss-side, between the rising and the setting of the stars, that were now out in thousands, clear, bright, and sparkling over the unclouded sky.

Those who had lain down for an hour or two in bed could scarcely be said to have slept; and when about morning little Margaret awoke, an altered creature, pale, languid, and unable to turn herself on her lowly bed, but with meaning in her eyes, memory in her mind, affection in her heart, and coolness in all her veins, a happy group were watching the first faint smile that broke over her features; and never did one who stood there forget that Sabbath morning, on which she seemed to look round upon them all with a gaze of fair and sweet bewilderment, like one half-conscious of having been rescued from the power of the grave.

JAMES MAIDMENT

1794-1879

THE CATERAN OF LOCHLOY

Were I to lose sight of my native hills, my heart would sink, and my arm would wither like fern i' the winter blast.—ROB ROY.

“**A**ND so, my dear lads, you wish me to relate my passage with the Caterans of Lochloy?” said General Dangerfield.

“Do, father; you will so oblige me,” replied the younger of his two sons.

“Well, then,” continued the General, laying his hand upon the boy’s head, “you shall have it; but, remember, no interruption; I must tell my story my own way.”

“Agreed!” replied his eldest son, Edmund, a fine youth of sixteen.

“Well,—to begin at the beginning—I am a native of Scotland—born on the Borders—of a respectable family well known there—the Jardines of that ilk. I entered the army young, and continued there the best part of my days. When quartered in England, I became acquainted with your angel mother; and upon her marriage with me, I was compelled by her father to assume her name, in order that the family estates might still be inherited by a Dangerfield.

“I was on service during that lamentable rebellion in which so much blood was poured out in an abortive attempt to restore a doomed race to their kingly possessions. I fought at Culloden; and well remember, and with horror witnessed, the cruelties that followed the victory. The Saxons, as we were called, were in consequence execrated; and the Highlanders burned with a fierce desire to avenge their slaughtered friends and kinsmen. So circumstanced, it is almost unnecessary to remark that the Government troops were peculiarly obnoxious; and it was consequently very dangerous for them to wander to any distance from their respective stations; as, in many instances, where they had been so foolhardy as to disregard the strict injunctions on the subject, they never returned to tell the tale.

“I had leave of absence for a short time; and I therefore quitted my quarters, which were at Inverness, in order to spend my Christmas with my relations in Kelso—for I was not then married. As is usual,

where friends are happy and comfortable, they were not fond of separating too soon, and I was loath to leave the hospitable board of my entertainers ; so I lingered as long as I could, and thus made it a matter of necessity to proceed northwards with the utmost despatch. It is a long way between Kelso and Inverness ; and I had to proceed on horseback, accompanied by a single servant. We got on very well till we reached Glasgow, after which the journey was both tedious and vexatious.

" On the second day, after quitting the western metropolis, there came on a great fall of snow, partially obstructing the roads, which, in those days, were not in the very best state even in good weather ; and, after pursuing, apparently, the proper route for at least a couple of hours, I found that we had lost our way—no very agreeable discovery, especially towards the close of day. However, there is nothing like putting the best face on a thing when you cannot help it, so we boldly pushed on in the vain hope of at last getting into the right path. Vain it assuredly was ; for, after wandering about till it became dark, we made the important discovery that we were just as far off as ever from escaping from our difficulties.

" ' Is not yon `a light, sir ? ' exclaimed my servant. ' See ! it is very high up.'

" I looked up, and, certainly, there was a light ; but from what it proceeded I could not conjecture. It could hardly be from a house, as it was too much elevated. I desired my servant to follow, and we made for the mysterious place, which was, with some difficulty, reached ; and where, to our infinite dismay, in place of finding ourselves in the vicinity of a house, we discovered that we were at the foot of a tremendous precipice, and the light that had guided us was still glimmering at an apparently inaccessible height above our heads.

" In this state of desperation, we halloed, and made as much noise as possible, and were speedily answered by a human voice, inquiring why we made such a disturbance, and what we wanted. I answered :

" ' Shelter for the night, and food ; for we are nearly dead from hunger.'

" To this no reply was made for a few moments, when a voice again answered :

" ' Remain where you are, and I will descend and remove you from this place of danger.'

"A man then descended from the rocks, and desired us to follow him, which we did, with some reluctance—more especially as we were compelled to leave our horses below.

" 'Never mind the cattle ; they will be taken good care of,' said our conductor, laying especial emphasis on the word 'good.'

"I must confess that I did not feel by any means comfortable. But what was to be done ? Starvation stared us in the face, and the danger of perishing by cold, or by falling into some of the deep ravines that lay about me, was but too probable ; so I mustered up all my courage, and followed my unknown guide, who led me, by a very precipitous and dangerous path, to a large cavity in the centre of the rock. My servant came last ; and, when we reached the place of our destination, we beheld a vast pile of faggots lighted up in the middle of a prodigious vacuity. The warmth, as you may readily suppose, was very grateful to two travellers benumbed by cold ; and, while we were standing by the fire, the guide suddenly disappeared, but returned, some few minutes afterwards, from some concealed part of the subterranean habitation, with above fifty armed men.

"At such a very unexpected, not to say disagreeable, spectacle, in circumstances otherwise sufficiently alarming, both myself and servant felt no small degree of fear. Our trepidation was observed ; and one of the number, who seemed to have the command of the rest of the band, addressed me to the following purport :

" 'You can be at no loss to conjecture who we are, and what our ordinary occupation is ; but you have nothing to fear ; for, though we live by what is called violence, we are not destitute of humanity. Our depredations are never marked by cruelty, and seldom by blood ; and those whom necessity has thrown on our care have never either been treated with barbarity or suffered to want. We extort only a little from those who are able to spare it, and rather augment than diminish the property of the poor. We know, alas ! too well what the consequences would be were we to fall into the hands of the rich and powerful ; but we are resigned to our fate. We can only die once, and our enemies can inflict no greater vengeance upon us. Miserable we may be ; but we have a fellow-feeling for sufferers, and never take advantage of distress ; in truth, it is from no sordid love of gain, nor is it to pander to vicious habits or immoral purposes, that we live in this manner. It is because we have no other mode of support ; for, after the cruelties that have been perpetrated upon their disarmed

opponents, it were in vain to expect assistance or relief at the hands of our Hanoverian oppressors.

“ ‘ You see our quarters, and shall have every accommodation they can afford you ; and, if you can trust us, who have neither inclination nor reason to deceive you, we give you a hearty welcome to these adamantine abodes, and that with the most perfect sincerity. Our fare is homely but wholesome ; and our beds, though coarse, are clean. Nor be under any concern for your horses ; they too shall share our protection and hospitality. We have no hay ; but they shall not want. Stables we have none ; but can shelter them, for one night at least, from the inclemency of the weather.’

“ This address revived our courage, which was not a little augmented upon being handed a bicker of whisky—mountain dew of the most delicious description ; at least I thought so then, and have never changed my opinion since. Talk of the wines of Spain, or of France, or the Rhine : I never felt from them half the delight I experienced in quaffing the nectar of the Gael. When we had finished, a supper was laid before us which might have provoked the appetite of an English alderman, and that is saying a good deal. We had blackcock and ptarmigan broiled, or, as it is called in Scotland, brandered ; fine black-faced Highland mutton done to a turn in the live ashes ; and a stew of snipes and wild duck, the aroma of which was perfectly ambrosial. I did ample justice to the good cheer, and ate with as much coolness and self-possession as if I had been seated in Dolly’s chop-house, in place of an apparently interminable cave, surrounded by caterans ; for so the Highland banditti are termed.

“ After having satisfied my craving appetite, in which example I had a worthy imitator in the person of my servant, rest was the next thing of which both of us stood in need. My generous host then led me to an inner apartment in the cave, which seemed at once to be the treasury and the magazine. There two sackfuls of heather were, by his orders, brought in and put on end, with the flower uppermost. Then a rope was fastened about the whole to keep it together, and on the top of each was placed a double blanket. On this simple contrivance, which formed an exquisitely soft and delicious couch, we laid ourselves down.

“ I had some notes of value about me, and above twenty guineas in gold, besides a very handsome gold watch, and other trinkets of no inconsiderable value ; but, as I had given them up for lost, I made

no attempt to secrete any of them. My host, 'apparently divining my suspicions, insisted upon mounting guard over us—a proposal which I strenuously opposed ; but he told me plainly that, unless he kept by me, he would not answer for the conduct of his companions. Against this there was no appeal ; and he remained beside us on the bare rock all the night.

“ In the morning, we found ourselves alone with this singular being. Everything remained as it had been the preceding evening, with this, to us, very pleasant exception, that the band of caterans was nowhere to be seen. Another fire of wood was speedily kindled ; and, as our host told us that, before we could reach any place of refreshment, we had to go twenty miles and a bittock—which, being interpreted, means somewhere about five miles more—we took the precaution to lay in a good stock of cakes, butter, and cheese, which we washed down with a moderate quantity of the nectar of the night preceding.

“ Our repast over, we descended the circuitous path which led from the cavern, and which one, uninitiated, might have searched for in vain ; and, at the bottom, found a lad or gilly holding our horses, which had been well fed, and were in fine spirits. Our host then declared his intention of putting us upon the right track, otherwise, he said, we were sure of losing our way. I desired my servant to dismount and follow us on foot ; but this the stranger refused to allow, assigning as a reason, that he preferred walking, and could, without the slightest difficulty, keep up with the horses. In this way, therefore, we proceeded nearly three miles ; and it was evident that, but for his friendly assistance, the chances of getting out of our difficulties would have been very problematical. At last he stopped, and said :

“ ‘ Pursue that path for half-a-mile farther, and you will enter upon the great road, after which you can have no difficulty in journeying to the place of your destination.’

“ I was quite overpowered with this kindness, and felt reluctant to part with my new friend without, at least, showing how much I appreciated his services.

“ ‘ Sir,’ said I, ‘ I am deeply affected by the whole of your conduct towards me and my servant. I can only hope that, some day or other, I may have it in my power to serve you. I have been treated like a prince, when I expected, if not to have my throat cut—which I once thought was inevitable—at least to have been robbed of every-

thing about me. At present I can only offer you this small remuneration, which I trust you will accept. I am only sorry that it is not more.' As I said this, I drew forth my purse with the intention of giving him all the gold I had about me, but he stayed my hand.

" ' Sir ! ' exclaimed the unknown, ' you have seen the way in which I and my companions live, and you may easily guess that to us gold can be no object. I thank you for the free and liberal way in which it was proffered ; but I most respectfully beg to decline accepting it. In serving you I merely followed a precept, which I ever—though a cateran—keep in view—to do to others as I would be done by myself. You were in distress, and I relieved you ;—there was no merit in doing what I knew was merely my duty ; and Ranald More will take no reward for having done that which his heart told him it was right to do.'

" ' Heavens ! ' I cried, ' are you Ranald More ? '

" ' I am ! '

" ' Why,' I rejoined, ' your name is a terror to all the country round.'

" ' I know it ; but what care I ? Let the bloodhounds take me if they can.'

" ' Are you aware that a reward is offered for your apprehension ? '

" ' Perfectly.'

" ' Why, then, should you trust yourself alone with two armed men ? '

" To show that he was perfectly regardless of fear, he merely pointed to his claymore, and I must confess that I should not have been anxious for a single combat, and, even with the assistance of my servant, I am not quite sure that we might not have come off second best.

" ' But,' continued the cateran, ' you are a gentleman and a man of honour. My secret is safe with you. Bid your servant ride on a few paces.' I gave the necessary order ; and, when we were alone, the cateran proceeded to narrate to me the following particulars of his life :

" ' I was born in the higher ranks of society ; but circumstances, which I need not recapitulate, reduced me to the humble condition of a peasant. Early misfortunes compelled me to conceal my name and family, and I enlisted as a private soldier. My conduct in the army attracted the attention of my superiors ; but I had no interest to rise higher than a halbert, and was discharged with the regiment in which I served. When Prince Charles landed on his native shores,

I refused to join him, as I considered myself in a manner bound, by my former services, to his opponent. I took, therefore, no further interest in this civil broil than to give my humble assistance to many of those persecuted men whom the bloody mandates of the Duke of Cumberland had marked out for destruction. In this way I have gradually collected around me a band of gallant fellows, who are ready to follow me on any enterprise, however desperate. It was not choice but necessity that compelled me to my present way of life. Some day or other I shall, in all human probability, be taken, and made an example of, to deter others from following the like courses. All I ask is, when you hear of my death—in whatever way that may happen—that you will not forget you owed your life to him who never took one but in the cause of his country, when he fought for his king and exposed his own. Farewell.'

"Then pressing my proffered hand in his, he turned away; and in a few minutes the Highland cateran was out of sight."

"Did you ever see him again, father?" inquired Edmund.

"I did; but in circumstances extremely painful; although to the last interview I had with him, I owe that portion of happiness with which Providence was graciously pleased to bless me."

"Indeed!—O father, do continue your story!"

"Well, Edmund, have patience, and you shall hear all. Time hurried on imperceptibly, and in a couple of years afterwards I found myself raised to the rank of a captain. The regiment had been ordered to Ireland, where it remained for about a year; but the Highlands of Scotland not being in a very settled state, it was ordered to that kingdom; and in the month of January 1748, I found myself once more in my old quarters, a circumstance far from displeasing, as I had many friends there anxious to make me comfortable.

"The severity of Government had by this time considerably relaxed; and as all fears of any new rebellion were at an end, an anxious endeavour was made to reduce the restless Highlanders to some sort of order, and put down the straggling bands of caterans that disturbed the tranquillity of the country, and kept the proprietors in a perpetual state of anxiety, by lifting, as it was called, their cattle, and other predatory acts.

"Upon inquiring after my old friend, Ranald, I was told he had not been heard of for a long time, and that it was generally supposed he had been killed in some of his marauding expeditions.

“ One individual seemed to be peculiarly obnoxious to these worthies, and his cattle had not only been repeatedly carried off, but his granaries had been despoiled. He had bought some of the forfeited estates at small value, and having the misfortune—for so it was reckoned amongst the proud Highlanders, whose pedigrees were generally as long as their purses were short—to be a *parvenu*, his father having been a grocer in the Luckenbooths of Edinburgh, he experienced no mercy from the caterans, and little sympathy from the gentry in his vicinity, who laughed at his misfortunes. To crown all, he had been a commissary in the army of the Duke of Cumberland ; and, though neither a bad man nor a hard landlord, still his original connection with the bloody Duke was a sin not to be forgiven, and hence the reason of his peculiar persecution.

“ Irritated by a series of provoking outrages, Peter Penny, Esq., of Glenbogle, appealed to our commander ; and, as he volunteered to guide a small detachment to the place where he had good reason to believe his tormentors were concealed, his appeal was listened to ; and, under the charge of one of our lieutenants, a party of some twenty or thirty soldiers proceeded to capture the caterans. As resistance was anticipated, they were well armed, and every precaution was adopted to prevent surprise by ambush.

“ Of all this I thought nothing. Such occurrences were common ; and, usually, the objects were accomplished with no very great difficulty. In this case, the result was different ; and although the detachment was successful, it was only so at a great expenditure of life ; for the caterans gave battle, and were eventually subdued, after killing five of the King’s troops, and severely wounding the commander. The laird himself escaped free ; for, holding the truth of the adage that the better part of valour is discretion, he prudently kept in the rear, and thus ran no other risk than a chance shot. Poor fellow, he assured me—and I believe he spoke with perfect sincerity—that, had he imagined so much blood was to be shed on his account, he had much rather the caterans had stolen every animal on his estate, and carried off its entire produce.

“ The defence had been well ordered ; and it required little observation to see that the chief of the caterans was skilled in military tactics. He fought with infinite bravery, and it was not until a great proportion of his band was either killed or wounded that his capture was effected ; and even this would have been doubtful, had he not been weakened

by loss of blood. He was, however, brought to Inverness, with one or two of his confederates, who had also been severely wounded. The rest retreated safely to the fastnesses of the mountains.

"The day following, I was somewhat surprised by an intimation that one of the captives was desirous of seeing me. I proceeded to the prison, when I found a man lying on a heap of straw, evidently in a very exhausted state.

" 'This is kind, Captain Jardine, very kind,' he exclaimed. Then, after pausing a minute, he proceeded, whilst a faint smile passed over his face : 'When we last met it was in different circumstances.'

" 'Gracious Providence !' I answered, 'can it be—do I see Ranald More ?'

" 'You see all that remains of him—a few short hours, and I shall be beyond the reach of earthly foes. I had once hoped that better days would have come ; but they came not. I sought pardon, but it was refused—driven back to my old courses, I am about to pay the penalty of my sins.'

"I endeavoured to reassure him ; for, in truth, I felt a sincere esteem for him, and personally knew his honourable principles, and deeply regretted that so noble a fellow should have been thrown away. I got the best medical advice, procured a comfortable bed, and everything that might tend to alleviate his sufferings during the brief remainder of his days.

"He was gratified by my attentions. 'One thing consoles me,' he said. 'I shall not die the death of a felon. You soldiers have spared me that disgrace.'

" 'Do not despond,' I rejoined ; 'whilst there is life there is hope, and——'

"Here he interrupted me with—

" 'No—no—no. I would not live if I could ; I am weary and need rest in my grave. Captain,' he continued, 'you have dealt with me kindly and considerately ; would you make me your debtor still farther ? I have one request to make, which, as it does not compromise you in the smallest degree, you will probably grant. It is to convey this ring to the only female in this world for whom I feel regard ; and tell her, that the being she cherished when all others neglected him, died blessing her.'

"I assured him I would obey his commands, and that the ring should be personally delivered.

“Ranald, then, as soon as cessation from pain would allow him, disclosed his history, which was brief but painful. The son of a gentleman of an ancient family in Northumberland, proud of his descent and large possessions, he had formed an attachment to one of the bondagers on his father's estate ; and, in a luckless hour, crossed the Borders, and was united to her at Lamberton—the Gretna Green of that part of the country. The result was the ordinary one—he was disinherited, and cast off by his father ; and his wife, not matching with one of her own rank, could not put up with her husband's ways, or reconcile herself to those habits of propriety which were essential to her new station in society. Unhappiness followed—poverty made him fretful and impatient ; although well educated, he would turn his attentions to no useful purpose, and, in a fit of desperation, he enlisted. During his banishment from home he saw none of his relatives excepting his niece, then a girl of fourteen, who loved her uncle, and used, by stealth, to bring to his humble dwelling such articles as she thought he might fancy ; and endeavoured, so far as was in her power, to soften the severity of his situation.

“The uncle's unexpected departure did not prevent the niece showing similar attentions to the wife ; but these were soon terminated by the demise of the latter, who died, with the infant, in her accouchement. For several years after this, nothing was heard of Ranald ; but the anger of his father continued unabated.

“Quitting the army, as I formerly mentioned, he joined the caterans ; and after our interview, determined to make an effort to obtain paternal forgiveness. He left his retreat ; and one evening presented himself suddenly before his father, who was residing at the family seat. He threw himself on his knees and asked pardon.

“‘Go,’ said his father. ‘Degenerate son, disgrace not, by your presence, the halls of your ancestors. In vain you supplicate—in vain you attempt to move me from my fixed purposes by your assumed penitence.’

“‘Have you no pity for your own offspring—for a being who, but for one unhappy act, never caused you a moment's pain—who has ever venerated and obeyed you ?’

“No answer was returned.

“‘Say you forgive me—I seek no more ; and I will leave you never to return, until my future acts have shown that I am not entirely unworthy of the proud race from whence I have sprung.’

" The old man was silent.

" ' For years a father's malison has embittered my life, and rendered me reckless of all consequences. Your pardon will restore me to myself ; and can you refuse to grant it ? ' "

" Still no response.

" ' If not for one so unworthy as the miserable wretch before you, at least on her account who gave me birth. Say you forgive me.' "

" ' Never.' "

" ' Father, we meet for the last time ; one word would have restored your son to happiness, and you refuse it. Farewell for ever ! ' "

" At this moment the door opened, and a beautiful girl of twenty rushed in, and threw herself into the old man's arms.

" ' Oh, sir, do not part in anger with your son ; you are so good, so kind. I am sure you will restore him to your favour.' "

" He gently disengaged her from his embrace.

" ' Emily,' said he, ' you are a good girl ; and on any other subject you might be sure I would listen to your wishes ; but on this point I am immovable ; and as Reginald deliberately dissolved the tie between father and son, I no longer recognise him as my child.' "

" Saying this, he left the room.

" Emily was sadly overcome by this unexpected repulse. She knew her grandfather's inflexibility, but imagined that the lapse of time would have softened his resentment. Her father—the heir-apparent—was then on the Continent ; and it was doubtful how far even his influence would produce any change on the unnatural anger of his incensed parent.

" ' Dear uncle, you know not how deeply I grieve at this unkind reception. Often have I thought on you during your tedious absence, and longed to see you again ; and now when my wish is gratified, I have no home here to offer you ; but we must not part—time yet may make all right ; and if you would only take up your abode near us, I would do everything to save you ; and when my father returns, we will unite our entreaties to obtain your pardon.' "

" ' Sweet girl ! ' replied Ranald, ' I duly appreciate your kindness ; but it is vain to contend against fate, and here I cannot—will not stay.' "

" The conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a footman, who, with some confusion and hesitation, intimated that his master wished the strange gentleman would make his visit as short as possible. Having delivered this message he withdrew.

“ ‘ Emily, farewell ! I have ever loved you ; and your kindness in this hour of trial shows my love was not misplaced.’

“ ‘ Do not leave me, uncle ; better days will come.’

“ ‘ It is vain to urge my stay ; my father shall be obeyed. Once more, farewell !’

“ His niece found his resolution immovable. She entreated him to take her purse ; this he refused. She then placed on his finger a ring : it was the fatal one—the cause of all his misery. The sight of it overcame him. He wept bitterly. Claspings his niece to his arms, he said, in faltering accents :

“ ‘ Beloved girl ! this fatal testimonial shall part from me only with death ; and, when you see it again, be assured that all my earthly cares are over.’

“ He then quitted the home of his forefathers, never again to return. After wandering about for months, necessity drove him back upon his old companions. But he had lost his energy ; and it was not until the attack upon the caterans that he again became the Ranald More of olden times.

“ The kindness and affection of his niece made a deep impression on Ranald’s mind ; and his chief anxiety now was to make her acquainted with his fate, and to let her know that he died a repentant man, in the hope of forgiveness in ‘ another and a better world.’

“ The night before he expired, I sat beside him. Ranald was composed. He said :

“ ‘ Often, very often, kind friend, have I meditated, after my last repulse, putting an end to my existence ; but religion came to my aid, and I resisted manfully the temptings of the fiend. Resignation to the Divine will, under every disappointment and affliction, is a duty we all owe to our great Creator, and this precept of my dear mother was too deeply implanted in my mind ever to be entirely eradicated. Forgiveness of our enemies she also inculcated ; and I can say, with perfect sincerity, that I die in peace with all mankind.’

“ ‘ Even your father ?’ I inquired.

“ ‘ Yes ; even that cruel parent, through whose obduracy I am now a degraded felon, is forgiven by me. But no more of this. When you see Emily, give her my blessing. Tell her that her dying uncle had her always in his thoughts ; and that, in his last moments, he prayed for her prosperity and happiness.’

“ As he was evidently much exhausted, I entreated him not to

fatigue himself by further conversation. The clergyman arriving, I took my leave, and returned in the morning. He was still sensible ; and the man who had sat up with him mentioned that he had been very quiet all night, though he apparently slept very little. When I approached the bedside he recognised me ; and, with extreme difficulty, articulated :

“ ‘ Remember ! ’

“ I assured him that his request should be implicitly complied with. His last words were ‘ Bless you ! ’ Raising himself, he placed his wife’s marriage ring on my finger, pressed my hand feebly, and, overcome by the exertion, fell back on his pillow ; a gentle slumber seemed gradually to come over him, from which he never awoke.

“ As he was only known as Ranald More, the secret of his birth and rank was carefully preserved by me ; my adventure with him of former years was generally known, and my anxiety about him, and my following his body to the grave, created no manner of surprise. His companions were tried, convicted, and executed. The death of their leader, and the capital punishment inflicted on his followers, had a wholesome effect in that district, and ‘ lifting ’ of cattle, from that time, became, at least there, somewhat uncommon.

“ Resolved to redeem my pledge, I procured leave of absence, and journeyed to Northumberland ; where I found the family in mourning for the old gentleman, who had died, strange to say, about a week before his son. The delivery of the ring at once announced the cause of my visit, and my attentions to the unhappy donor were repaid by the extreme kindness of his relatives. His brother, Edmund, thought he could never do too much for me ; and the kind-hearted and beautiful niece of the ill-fated Ranald became ”——(here he paused).

“ What, father ? ” inquired Edmund.

“ YOUR MOTHER.”

HENRY DAVID INGLIS

1795-1885

THE JEWEL-HUNTER

I WAS about fourteen years old when my father carried me to the great fair of Cracow, whither he went to purchase tools for his business, which was that of a lapidary, and which he carried on at Michlinitz. The size of the town, the magnificence of the buildings, the crowds that thronged the streets, and the novelty and beauty of the wares, surprised and delighted me ; but nothing enchanted me so much as the model of the citadel in salt, which, according to the usual custom, was placed in the great square upon a pedestal of marble.

As we walked along one side of the square, looking for the shop of a merchant from whom my father wished to purchase some stones, we saw a great crowd collected before a door at some little distance, and as we came nearer, it proved to be the shop of the identical merchant whom my father sought. So great was the crowd, that we were unable to approach nearer than within twenty yards of the door ; and as my father pushed forward, anxious to despatch his business—

“ What now ? ” said a fellow in the throng ; “ softly, if you please ; do you think nobody wants to see the opal but yourself ? ”

“ What opal is it,” said my father, addressing a man who stood beside him, “ that excites so much curiosity ? ”

“ Have you not heard,” replied the man, “ of that wonderful opal that Schmidt the jewel-hunter found in the mountains, and which has just been bought for the king at the price of 100,000 florins ? ”

My father was now as anxious to see the opal as anybody else ; and when he had succeeded in reaching the shop, the merchant took my father and myself into a back room, carrying the opal along with him, that the business upon which we came might be transacted more quietly ; telling the crowd that besieged the door that the opal was not to be seen any more that day.

My father and the merchant immediately began to make their bargains, leaving the examination of the opal until their business should be concluded, while I all the while kept the precious stone in

my hand, looking at it, and admiring it, and thinking of its extraordinary value. I was entirely ignorant of the worth of jewels, and, although my father was a lapidary, scarcely could distinguish between one stone and another ; for my mother having resolved that I should follow the profession of the law, I had been put to school at an early age, and was therefore more an adept at my books than a judge of precious stones. I knew, however, that the stone I held in my hand had been purchased by the king for 100,000 florins, and as one florin even seemed to me an inexhaustible sum, 100,000 florins might well baffle my utmost powers of conception.

At length the merchant and my father, having finished their business, turned their attention to the opal, and discoursed in the most extravagant terms of its extraordinary beauty and value, and of the wonderful good fortune of the finder,—all of which made a deep impression upon me. As we passed from the merchant's house through the square, I importuned my father to show me the exhibition of an Armenian juggler ; but he refused me, saying it would cost half a florin. Half a florin, thought I—only half a florin ; and this jewel-hunter has found a gem worth 100,000 ! All the way from Cracow to Michlinitz I was occupied with these thoughts, and every minute was turning my head to look at the mountains, almost expecting to see the colours of the opal reflected from some sun-gilt cliff.

A few days after my father returned home he fell sick ; and, notwithstanding the advantage of an excellent constitution, and all the care of my mother, and the medicines of the physician, he sunk under the disease, and died at the end of eight days, leaving his family but slenderly provided, and me, his only son, with his wits for patrimony, and the world the sphere in which they were to be exercised.

It was now out of the question to think of breeding me for the law ; I must be apprenticed to some trade, and, my head being still full of the opal, I petitioned to be placed under the care of a lapidary. My mother consented,—and I accordingly took up my abode in a garret, in which there were abundance of precious stones to feast my eyes upon, and preserve the recollection of the opal and the 100,000 florins. I was anxious to learn my trade, and yet I worked but little at it. An indistinct dream of kingly wealth, and embryo projects of acquiring it, floated in my brain. The window of my garret looked into the country, the long chain of the Carpathian Mountains bounding the

prospect ; and in place of polishing stones and learning my business, I used to spend at least every alternate half-hour standing at my window, thinking of Schmidt and his opal, and his 100,000 florins ; and, as I took my seat again, saying to myself aloud, " I see no reason why I, as well as Schmidt, may not find an opal."

During all this time I never communicated my thoughts to my mother ; I told her, indeed, at times, that one day or other I should make the fortune of the family,—by which she understood that I intended to become an expert lapidary, and so acquire independence.

About three years passed away thus ; and at the end of that time I requested leave from my master to go and see an uncle, who lived at Dunavitz, and who was a breeder of cattle. My uncle, however, was but a secondary consideration in my mind ; I determined to make this journey subservient to my first trial of fortune ; and, accordingly, provided myself secretly with a hammer and with such other tools as I thought might be useful.

My uncle received me with great kindness, as did also my aunt and cousins ; and when I told them I had been apprenticed three years to a lapidary, and had already acquired considerable skill in stones, and that my master had sent me for a few days to practise my knowledge among the mountains (which falsehoods, God, I trust, will forgive me), I was liberally supplied with everything requisite ; a sack was filled with eatables, and I was furnished with tinder, and a knife to cut krumholz, and many other little necessities and comforts : and with the good wishes of all the family, and injunctions to return in four days, I slung my sack over my shoulder, and marched away, to begin my career as a *jewel-hunter*.

Nothing could be more buoyant than my spirits were as I began to ascend the inclined plane that led to the foot of the mountains. I felt as if all the riches they contained were one day or other to be my own. This was the very peak I had seen so often from my garret window ; this was the very chain among which Schmidt had found the opal ; and who could tell, if he had found a jewel worth 100,000 florins, that there might not be other jewels in the mountains, worth ten times as much ?

With these pleasant fancies, I at length reached the mouth of a narrow valley, that seemed to me the entrance to the abodes of Plutus. I soon fell to work, making the valley re-echo with the blows with which I belaboured the rocks, and continued my exertions without finding

anything that in the least resembled a jewel, until I was obliged to stop from sheer exhaustion. This was rather disheartening ; but I consoled myself by coming to the conclusion that I had not yet penetrated far enough into the mountain. It was not so pleasant to sleep upon the mountain-side as even in my garret ; but this was an inconvenience that I knew must be submitted to, and I felt persuaded that next day my labours would turn to more account.

I awoke at least two hours before daybreak, and longed for the light with as much impatience as if I needed light only to show me the path to exhaustless treasures. Long before the highest mountain peaks were tipped with the sunbeams I was making my way over rocks and torrents, hastening to a more distant ravine, not a bit daunted by the unsuccessful labours of the day before, but on the contrary, with the fullest expectations, if not of an opal as good as Schmidt's, of at least something sufficient to verify my predictions of good fortune. This day I half filled my sack ; not, indeed, with opals, but with stones and ores which I promised myself were a handsome reward for my labour. Schmidt, thought I, did not find his opal the first time he went among the mountains ; I must not be too hasty in my ambition. The next morning I began to retrace my steps, filling my sack as I went along, and arrived, at the close of the third in place of the fourth day, at my uncle's house. Great congratulations followed the display of my riches.

" This," said I, " is garnet, this is lapis lazuli, this is gold ore ; but I have found no opal yet."

" All in good time," said my uncle ; " and how much is all this worth ? "

" Certainly not less," said I, " than three hundred florins."

My uncle looked somewhat incredulous ; my aunt said something about the small profits of cattle-breeding, when money was to be picked up in this way by children ; and my cousins, who were all females, and some years younger than myself, looked upon me as the most wonderful youth in Galicia.

Next day I took my leave, carrying my treasures, of course, along with me ; but knowing very well that more than one-half of them were worthless, and that I had exaggerated their value to my uncle, I stopped on the bank of a little stream, and, after a rigid examination of the contents of my sack, threw more than half into the water, making myself sure that what I had reserved was worth a hundred and fifty

florins, at least. I went to my master's house before presenting myself at home, and found him at work.

"I have brought something with me," said I, emptying the sack upon the ground, and laying a handful upon the table at which he was working; he took up one and then another, without saying anything, for he was a man of few words, and slightly glancing at them, threw them into a corner, which he made the receptacle for rubbish. One handful after another I laid upon the table, and each specimen was in its turn consigned to the corner; the last handful was produced, and in it there was one specimen, upon which my hopes were chiefly grounded, and upon which I had made some marks when I displayed my riches to my uncle. He looked more narrowly at this specimen than he had at the others, but ended by throwing it where he had thrown the rest, and saying:

"All rubbish, my boy, so get to your business."

My hopes, then, were at an end; and the three hours that intervened between this and bedtime were the most unhappy hours of my life.

As I lay in bed sleepless, ruminating upon the failure of all my brilliant expectations, it suddenly occurred to me that possibly my master might be mistaken, and that the jewel which I had marked might be judged differently of by some other lapidary; and getting up, I crept softly downstairs into my master's workshop, and lighted a small lamp at the expiring embers of a fire, which he had been using in some of his operations. I then began to search among the rubbish for the stone which was marked, but I could nowhere find it; one after another I held them to the lamp, and repeated over and over again the same toilsome examination, till at length, weary of my unsuccessful labour, I sat down upon the chair before my master's table, which was strewn with the instruments he had used in polishing a beautiful jacinth, that lay with the polished side towards me. I took it up; it was the very stone I had been seeking for.

My plan was speedily arranged; I seized upon the stone, stole back to my chamber, dressed myself as quickly as I could, and, although it was not much after midnight, took the road to Cracow; leaving a line for my master, informing him that, having discovered him to be a thief, I had left his service, and had taken with me my own jewel, which my uncle could prove to be mine, by a mark which I had made upon it. I found no difficulty in disposing of my jewel; the same merchant whom I had visited along with my father gave me a hundred

florins for it, and congratulated me upon having begun my career so favourably ; and next day I returned home with a present for each member of the family, and with more than eighty florins in my pocket.

There was now no question as to my future trade ; my first attempt had met with more success than any one, excepting myself, anticipated ; and although I had not yet found an opal, I had no great cause to be dissatisfied, and looked upon the acquisition of riches as the easiest thing imaginable.

The money that my jacinth fetched served to equip me for my next expedition. I left forty florins at home, and set out for Kostalesko, on my nineteenth birthday, with the blessings of a mother and the good wishes of three sisters ; all of whom I promised to portion handsomely as soon as I had found an opal worth but 20,000 florins. All three looked upon their portions as already secured, and as I walked out of Michlinitz, I did not forget to cast my eye upon the fields on either side, in the view of making up my mind as to the most eligible site for building a house upon with the produce of my labours.

The first day on which I set out upon my travels, and when just entering the mountains, I overtook two men, well advanced in years, whose tattered garments and squalid faces denoted the extremest poverty and wretchedness. I fell into conversation with them, and learned that they were gold-hunters.

" Why," said I, " do you not rather follow the trade of jewel-hunting ? " secretly pleased, however, that I had not found rivals in my own occupation.

They only smiled at me, and I, in my turn, pitied the delusion that had kept them poor all their lives, instead of buying a castle and rearing horses, as Schmidt had done.

Almost every day during a year I spent less or more of it among the mountains ; sometimes my labours were rewarded, but oftener I found nothing worth so much as a few groschen ; yet never during all this time did my hopes diminish, nor did my continued toil become in the smallest degree irksome. Every morning I sprang from my bed full of eager anticipation, and every night longed for the morning, that I might recommence my search ; days of unrewarded toil I looked upon only as procrastinations of my good fortune ; each rising sun brought new expectation along with it, and if one blow of the hammer did not loose an opal from the rock, I thought a second might.

At length, one day, at the expiration of nearly a year from the

day I left home, a stone dropped into my hand, that had all the distinguishing marks of a valuable opal. I eagerly proceeded to polish a part, and the varied hues of the opal flashed upon my delighted eye. Now then, said I to myself, the day of my reward has arrived. The stone I had found was little inferior in size to that which I had held in my hand in the merchant's back shop at Cracow, the look of which I yet remembered so distinctly ; and I felt assured it could not be worth less than 50,000 florins.

As I bent my steps homewards I employed myself in that most agreeable of all occupations, planning the distribution and assortment of riches which I felt assured were on the eve of being mine. The close of the third day brought me to the threshold of my own door ; and I was welcomed with those true greetings which a son, after long absence, may expect to find from a mother's love. My countenance soon told the extent and importance of my secret ; and the opal was drawn from its hiding-place with exulting looks, and presented to the wondering eyes of the family circle. I determined to lose little time in realising my expectations. The next week the great Cracow fair would take place, and thither I of course determined to go.

It was soon settled what was to be done with the 50,000 florins. I had promised to portion my sisters ; each of them, accordingly, should have two thousand, which would make them the richest heiresses in Michlinitz ; I would give four thousand to my mother ; and "as for the remaining 40,000," said I, "my little cousin Ronza, at Dunavitz, will make me a good wife, and I will purchase a barony somewhere in the Palatinate."

These things being all determined upon, I left home for the capital, early on the morning of the day of the great fair, with my opal in a leathern bag, which was suspended round my neck by a copper chain. I overtook and passed a great many persons on the road ; for I was mounted upon a good horse, which I had bought with the remnant of the hundred florins I had made by my jacinth ; "but which among them all," said I to myself, "carries to the fair an opal worth 50,000 florins !"

Before midday I arrived at the capital, and having put up my horse at an inn in the outskirts, walked towards the great square, by the same streets I had traversed with my father five years ago. What changes had taken place since then ; and to what extraordinary results had the impressions which were made upon my mind at that time

led ! Happy fortune, thought I, that carried my father to Cracow ; had he never gone thither, I should never have seen the wonderful opal, or even so much as heard of a jewel-hunter, and never should have been walking, as now, to the great fair, with a jewel in my possession worth 50,000 florins.

I had no reason to doubt the integrity of the merchant with whom I had formerly dealt ; but before finally disposing of my treasure, I wished to enjoy the triumph of possessing it : I was anxious, in short, that as great a noise should be made about my opal as about that which Schmidt sold to the king. I walked accordingly through the great square, seeking an opportunity of making my good fortune known, and of buzzing about the rarity and value of my possession.

As I went onward, looking to the right hand and to the left, my attention was fixed by the extraordinary richness and variety of a display of wares which were exhibited upon a long row of tables, placed beneath an awning, behind which an eastern merchant sat smoking.

Every species of costly and rare merchandise lay upon the tables. The richest stuffs, brocades, silks, and gold-tissues from Persia,—the most valuable spices and perfumes from India and Arabia,—Damascus' sabres, the hilts inlaid with gold and ivory, and studded with precious stones,—the rarest gums of Africa and of Guyana,—temples and pagodas, curiously carved in ivory, and the most precious woods,—the most excellent specimens of Mosaic,—cameos and intaglios, of the most valuable materials and the most exquisite workmanship,—all swelled the riches of the eastern merchant's bazaar.

But rich and valuable as were these commodities, the contents of one other table eclipsed them all : it was covered with all kinds of precious stones, ranged in rows, circles, and pyramids : diamonds, emeralds, rubies, sapphires, topaz, of all sizes, and of the finest colours, glittered in the sunshine, and dazzled and delighted the eye ; but among them I saw no opal.

" Friend," said I to the merchant, " you reign here the emperor of the fair ; upon your tables are concentrated the riches of all the cities of the East ; every country in the world has laid its tribute before you ; and yet," added I, " there seems one thing wanting."

" What," said he, without taking his pipe from his mouth, " would you desire to see added ? "

" I see," replied I, " this beautiful pyramid, composed of precious

stones, two rows of topaz, two of ruby, two of sapphire, two of emerald, and one of diamond, with this fine pearl surmounting the whole ; but for the pearl I would substitute an opal."

" I could soon make that change," said the merchant, taking the pipe out of his mouth, " but to my mind the pearl brings the pyramid to a better point ; there is not a jewel, young man, that ever came out of the bowels of the earth, that I have not in my possession : and I will venture the worth of this pyramid that I can show a better stone of every kind than any other merchant now in Cracow—ay ! in Poland—ay ! in Europe," added he, glancing triumphantly at his tables, and then resuming his pipe.

I thought within myself, " He has no opal, he is too proud of his jewels to submit to the suspicion of not having one, were it in his power to prevent it " ; and I immediately replied, " I have not the value of the pyramid to stake, but I will venture the value of a jewel which I will produce to you, that you will not match it."

" Name its value," said the merchant as unconcernedly as before, " and I will take your word for it ; select its worth among these jewels, and lay them on one side, and then place your own opposite to them, and whoever gains shall take up both stakes ; you yourself shall decide whether or not I produce a jewel more valuable of its kind than yours."

This I thought was extremely fair, or rather more than fair ; for it put it in my power to stake against my jewel something double its value. I did not, however, profit by this advantage, but selected a diamond which I judged to be worth about 50,000 florins, and laid it upon one side. There was now collected around the table a considerable number of persons, attracted at first by the wares, and now interested in the conversation they had overheard, and all anxiously waiting the result of so considerable a wager. I had thus obtained precisely what I desired—an opportunity of displaying my riches, and enjoying the vanity of possessing so rare a gem ; to say nothing of the diamond that glittered on the table, and which I already considered as my own. I now pulled the chain over my head, and, opening the leathern purse, drew forth my opal, and laid it upon the table opposite to the diamond.

" A fine opal, indeed," said the merchant, laying down his pipe and examining it, " and worth more than the diamond you selected, and precisely the thing for the top of the pyramid. My own, you see,

is too large," added he, opening the lid of an ebony box, and laying upon the table the very opal Schmidt had sold to the king, the appearance of which I remembered so well.

What were my feelings at that moment?—the object of my toil, and hopes, and promises, gone from me in an instant, and by my own accursed folly and vanity. The merchant deliberately returned the pipe into his mouth; took up my opal, and, displacing the pearl, crowned the pyramid with the opal.

"Now," said he, "you will admit that the pyramid is faultless." He then returned his own opal into the box, and calmly began to arrange some of his wares.

I turned away in the deepest dejection; but the expressions of pity from the bystanders, so different from those with which I had expected to be greeted, wounded me more even than the loss of my wealth. I repaired to the shop of the merchant whom I knew, but without communicating to him what had happened. The circumstance, however, soon got wind; it was soon buzzed about everywhere that an ignorant youth had allowed himself to be juggled out of a valuable jewel by the great Bassora merchant, Haranzabad; and I had the mortification of seeing myself pointed at as this ignorant youth.

"How could you be so mad," said the merchant, my friend, "as to stake any opal against Haranzabad's?—had you come to me first, you would have learned, what everybody knows, that the king pledged his opal to that merchant for a loan, upon condition that he should not exhibit it openly at the fair."

I had now neither business nor inclination to detain me at the fair. I sold my horse, and in place of turning homeward with 50,000 florins in my purse, I had but 200, partly the price of my horse, and partly the balance of a debt which the lapidary was owing to my father. How different were my feelings on my road homeward from what they would have been had I been returning to the realisation of my projects! My sisters' portions, my mother's provision, my cousin Ronza, and my expected barony, all came to my mind, only to reproach me for my vanity and folly.

I was still a jewel-hunter, and had still my fortune to make; yet, wonderful as it may appear, at this very moment, when my hopes were newly crushed, they began to rise again; new dreams of riches, and even projects of their appropriation, occupied my mind, and

almost excluded the recollection of my misfortune, and the very hour that witnessed the destruction of all my expectations and the futility of my toils, saw also born within me a steadier determination than ever to renew them, and as firm a persuasion that they would yet be rewarded.

Providence, however, has not yet thought fit to crown my hopes ; but I have lived happily notwithstanding. Never has my hammer laid open the lustre of another opal, but I have always been cheered on by expectation ; my toil has never been rewarded by independence, but it has brought me food and raiment, and left me something to wish for ; I have never entered Cracow again with the exulting thought that I was about to possess myself of 50,000 florins, but neither have I ever quitted it with the painful reflection that I have lost the fruit of a year's labour, and of many years' hope ; I have had no portions to bestow upon my sisters, but they have married, and have been happy without them ; no provision to settle upon my mother, but she is long ago beyond the need of it ; no barony to offer Ronza, but she has never appeared to wish for more than she possesses.

Old age steals fast upon me, and so would it if I had possessed riches ; death has no greater terrors for the poor than for the rich man, nor has he so much to disturb the serenity of his meditations. My children regret that I should leave them, and their regrets are sincere, because, when I am gone, they expect no equivalent ; yet had I even now youth and vigour, I would still pursue the occupation, which I trust my children will never desert, for one day or other their labours will be rewarded. Schmidt has not found the first opal, nor myself the last ; and riches may be enjoyed by him who knows how to use them. Go on, then, my children ; do not shrink from toils which your father has borne, nor despair of the success which he once achieved, and of which the inexperience of youth only robbed him of the reward.

RICHARD THOMSON

1794-1865

THE PIPER OF MUCKLEBROWST

ABOUT a century since, in the last "rugging and riving days" of Scotland, before the modern march of intellect had so completely routed the wonderful arts of magic and witchcraft as to leave neither witch nor conjuror in all the broad lands of Britain, there lived a noted fellow called Rory Blare, who filled the office of town-piper to the prosperous fishing port of Mucklebrowst. He always affirmed his family to be of high antiquity, and as he was disclaimed by the Blairs of that Ilk, and the Blairs of Balthayock, and the Blairs of Lethendie, and the Blairs of Overdurdy, and, in short, by all the other Blairs, he set up at once to be the head of the Blares of Bletherit and Skirlawa', which have furnished Scotland with pipers ever since it was a country. In the course of his life Rory had performed the various parts of fisherman, sailor, soldier, and pedlar, none of which professions are peculiarly likely to teach a man temperance; and having procured his discharge in consequence of a wound in his head, which carried away a small fraction of his brain-pan, about the sober age of fifty-seven he settled down into a roistering and carousing town-piper.

As he had a good deal of those rambling, mischief-loving, satirical characters, called in Scotland *hallen-shakers* and *blether-skytes*, and his strangest tricks were played, and his fun was ever the most furious when the malt was over the meal, all who knew him declared that "he certainly had a bee in his bonnet, puir man! ever sin' he gat that sair paik on his pow in the wars."

Rory himself, however, was wont to assert that "he was as gude a man as ever"; which, perhaps, might be true in one sense, as he never was very celebrated for either his prudence or his sobriety.

So much for his person and character; and for his talents as a piper, he could most merrily "blaw up the chanter," as the old song says, with some skill and "richt gude will," untired, even through a long night of active dancing and loud carousal; which, with his mirth

and bold demeanour, made him a special favourite throughout Mucklebrowst and its vicinity.

Without at all underrating his own knowledge of music, he was fond of attributing some part of his popularity to his instrument, which, he was accustomed to relate, had been found in one of the holy wells of St. Fillan, in Perthshire ; thereby inheriting a finer tone and easier breath than any mere mortal pipes could ever boast of, beside the power of resisting all kinds of glamour or witchcraft. The truth of this was never rightly known, though it was whispered that, if the pipes had belonged even to St. Fillan himself, Rory Blare had employed them so differently, that if they ever possessed any virtue it had long since departed.

As the worthy town-piper was always ready to be foremost in any kind of sport, or to bestow his counsel in any case of courtship, marriage, or witchcraft, which occupied the gossips,—that is to say, all the inhabitants of Mucklebrowst—he was everywhere welcome. But, though he distributed his patronage pretty equally, he appeared to be most merry, and to make himself most at home at the Maggie Lauder's Head, a little *public* kept by one Bauldie Quech, whose jovial and careless disposition matched exactly with his own.

They would frequently sit till " the sma' hours," driving away time by glass after glass, rant after rant, and song after song, until the decease of Katie Quech, Bauldie's contentious spouse ; when, though all expected to see him take a younger and more agreeable partner, and had even settled who it was to be, he suddenly sank into a dismal and melancholy mood, under the influence of which he drank twice as much as before, though he never laughed at all. Rory Blare, however, did not desert his old companion ; for indeed the warmth of his friendship very frequently led him to sit piping and drinking with him throughout the whole night ; and one dark and windy evening in autumn they were thus engaged, with a single sedate-looking stranger habited in pale grey, who had come in about nightfall.

" Hout, tout, man ! " exclaimed Rory, finding that even St. Fillan's blessed pipes had no effect upon his host, " ye're unco hard to please, I trow ; and yet yere lugs used to ken whan they heard gude music : but I daur say the deil's cussen his cloak owre ye, as King Jamie said o' his bairn. Ye'll no think now, honest frien'," continued he, addressing himself to the guest, " that the gudeman was ance ane o' the merriest men o' Mucklebrowst, though ever sin' Luckie Quech died

he's no had a word for a dog, let alone a blythe lad or a bonnie lassie."

"Let him look for another Luckie, then, and the sooner the better," answered the stranger; "take heart, man, there's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it."

"And that's true too, though the deil himsel' spak it," rejoined the piper; "I'm thinkin', Bauldie, that I'll hae to play 'Fy, let us a' to the bridal,' before ye yet. And wha shall it be, gudeman? wha shall it be? for ye ken there's a hantle o' bonnie lassies in Mucklebrowst, to speak naething o' them o' Leven, or the limmers o' Largo. But ye'll look to the tocher, billie, and see that the lass has a quick lug for the music, and a light fit for the dance."

"They may hae what they will for me," at length answered the host, with a deep sigh, "and they may be as bonnie as they will for me; but they can nane o' them be either less or mair to me."

"Think again, friend," said the guest, "and you will think better of it, for I've often known as broken a ship come to land. What say ye now to Sibbie Carloups, of Gouks-haven, with golden hair on her head, and gold coin in her pouch; I promise you now, that she'd be the girl for me."

"She was no that unsonsie a lassie, but she was nae muckle better than wud, or a witch, when she leevet there," returned the piper, "but that's fu' twenty years ago, for she suddenly gaed awa' and no ane kenned where, though folk said she went mad, or was carried awa' to be the deil's jo, some gate about Forfar or Glammis."

"It's a' true!" exclaimed Bauldie Quech, in voice of great distress, "it's an ower true tale, as I ken fu' weel, and fu' sadly, though I didna think to hae tauld what I ken o't to ony ane but the minister: but, Rory, ye're a fearless and lang-headed chiel at a hard pass, and as ever ye did gude to a puir body at their wits' ends, ye maun e'en help me now."

"Say awa' then wi' yere story, neebor," returned the piper, "and if it be in the skeel o' man, and I dinna stand by you, may the deil burst the bag o' my pipes, and split the drone and chanter!"

"Weel, weel," answered the host, with more composure, "I'm no misdoubting ye, though I trow it's past your art; but at ony rate it will gie some ease to my mind, so I'll e'en mak a clean breast, and tell ye a' about it. About twenty years back, as ye said, Sibbie Carloups was the wale o' the lassies o' this coast, though a wild tawpie,

and I was no then a bad looking lad mysel' ; and as we foregathered thegither mair than ance, I e'en tell'd her my mind, and she listened to me, and sae at last we brak a saxpence in twa for a true-love token ; but frae that hour I saw her nae mair, for the vera next time I went to Gouks-haven she was departed."

" And did you no follow her, man ? " demanded Rory Blare, " ye suld hae followed her ower land and lea till ye met again ; I'se warrant she wadna hae 'scaped me like the blink o' a sunbeam."

" I did follow her," said Bauldie Quech, " and that for mony a lang and weary mile, and speir'd at every ane that I cam nigh, but I ne'er saw her again ; and sae, when I heard some auld carlines say that belike the witches had carried her awa', I e'en gied her up ; for naebody can find out what they dinna like to show. Weel, I cam back to Mucklebrowst, and years passed awa', and I thought nae mair o' the matter ; and at last I weddit Luckie Links, o' St. Monan's ; and then, as ye ken, she went to a better warl', and left me to get through this as I could.

" Weel, man, wad ye think it, she hadna been gane a week or mair, when an auld, ill-fa'ard, grewsome, gyre-carline cam up to the door ae muckle dark and windy even, when I was my lane, and called me her ain gudeman, and said she was Sibbie Carloups, come to claim my promise o' marriage ! ' And where hae ye been a' this time, Sibbie ? ' says I, when I could speak for wonder, and some little o' fear ; ' Troth, lad,' said she, ' I canna just tell ye where I hae been ; a frien' o' mine has taken me to see the warl', and made me gay rich, but ye see I dinna forget auld acquaintance ; here's the half o' the saxpence we brak, and as yere first jo's dead, we'll e'en be marryit when ye will.' ' Marry thee ! ' thought I, ' I'll suner see thee linkit to a tar-barrel ! ' But I was fain to speak her fairly, and so I askit her to come ben ; but she tauld me that there was sic a bush at my door that there was nae getting by it. ' Oh, ho ! Luckie ! ' thought I again, ' it's the rowan-tree branch, is it ? there it shall hing then for me ' : so I drew me back a wee, and then said bauldly, ' I'll e'en tell ye the truth, cummer ; folk say ye've been made a witch of, and I'm judging it's true ; but for byganes' sake ye'll get nae harm frae me, only tak up yere pipes and begone ; but first gie me back my siller, for I'll hae naething mair to do wi' you.'—' Aha, billie,' then said the auld carline, ' there are twa words to that ; if ye're fause and ungratefu', that's yere ain fault ; but while I've the broken saxpence I can weel hinder

yere marrying onybody without my leave, and maybe do a little mair ; sae think o' that, and be wiser in yere passion.'

" To mak the least o' a lang story, at last she sae put up my bluid that I rushed out o' the house to lay haud on her,—when, fizz ! she was gane like the whup o' a whirlwin', and the night was too dark to see whilk way the deil had carried her ! And after a' I haena done wi' the auld jaud, for in the darkest and wildest nights she comes rattling at the window-bole, and crying out that she's my ain jo, and has our broken saxpence ; but when I gae out I can tak haud o' nought, and see naething but a flisk o' her fiery eyes as she mounts up owre the house-rigging into the clouds on the nightmare. And now ye hae heard my story, I hae nae mair to say, than that I wad gae half my gudes to onybody wha wad get me back the half saxpence, and send Sibbie Carloups to be brunt at the Witches' Howe at Forfar."

" Baith o' whilk I wad do blithely," said the piper, " gin ye could tell me where I could find the witch-carline ; for I wadna think muckle o' meeting her and her haill clanjamfray wi' St. Fillan's pipes ; I trow I'd gae them sic music as they ne'er dancit to before."

" Waes me ! then," exclaimed Bauldie Quech in reply, " for there's nae finding a witch against her will ; sae there's nae help for me in this warld."

" But there may be some in another," said the stranger-guest, " and I think I can show it, if your piper-friend be only as stout and fearless as he seems ; I promise you that his success is certain, and that the only danger will be in shrinking back when the work is begun."

" Deil doubt me then," said Rory, " there's my thumb on't : and ye ken I'm no vera sune daunted."

" Then," answered the stranger, " the sooner you set out the better, since you may have a long journey before you ; so mount my horse, for he knows the way you're going ; ride out of the town towards Glammis, and you will meet a number of persons, with whom Sibbie Carloups will certainly be. Ask them for Gossip Paddock ; and say to her, that you come from Melchior the comptroller, who commands her to give up Bauldie Quech's token ; but take heed that you have no other intercourse with them, and, above all, that you bring nothing else away with you."

With these instructions and his blessed pipes Rory Blare departed, followed by the anxious hopes and good wishes of the host. He was nothing dismayed at the cheerless appearance of the night, which was

overclouded ; whilst a violent storm of wind roared round him, seeming as if it raged purposely to impede his progress. He rode on at a rapid pace ; but the way looked wilder and more lonely than usual, no person appearing of whom he might make his mystic inquiries. The features, too, of that well-known road seemed altogether altered, since the piper missed the little towns and change-houses with which he knew it to be studded ; though he failed not to recognise, with increased terror, the spots which had been rendered famous by any fearful circumstances. At length, however, he entered a deep and spacious glen, covered with dark heather, which was wholly unknown to him ; so that he was now assured that he had missed his way altogether.

As the wind still continued to blow furiously, and the rain to fall with violence between the gusts, Rory Blare was rejoiced to see the dim outline of a building appear in the glen before him, one part of which was glowing with lights, and resounding with the loudest notes of merriment. He made up to it, if it were only in the hope of getting some information of his way and a temporary shelter ; and arriving at a little stone portal, which was half open, beneath the lighted chambers, he rang, and knocked, and shouted without procuring any reply.

Alighting from the stranger's horse, therefore, and fastening him to the door, he went in and ascended a flight of narrow winding stairs, which terminated in a suite of state-chambers, decorated in the style, however, of three centuries before. The room which he first entered was richly illuminated, and in the centre appeared a table, round which several tall powerful men were seated, playing at cards. They were all habited in the most costly and antique dresses ; for there were pall and velvet, steel armour and two-handed swords, and robes of ermine and minever. They swore and stamped at each other, raged and shouted in the most fearful manner, as they won or lost the broad gold pieces which lay on the table before them ; but the most furious of all was one old hard-featured baron who sat at the head of the chamber, distinguished from the rest by an immensely long beard. He lost much and repeatedly, tore the cards and dashed his clenched hands passionately on the board, then called for wine, and again engaged in the game, swearing that he would play on till doomsday.

The terrific features of this scene made even the piper desirous of exchanging it for the stormy night and dark glen without ; but upon looking round for the door by which he entered, he found that it had closed, and was covered by hangings similar to the rest of the room,

so that it could nowhere be seen. Whilst he was gazing about him for some other passage, he was accosted by the long-bearded nobleman, who demanded of him in a thundering tone "what he wanted, and who sent him there?"

Rory felt his blood rather chilled whilst he answered that he had missed his way to Glammis, on the road to which one Master Melchior the comptroller had sent him to inquire for Gossip Paddock, to recover a token from her.

"The fiend take Melchior the comptroller!" exclaimed the ancient baron, "he'll ruin the trade of us a', if he gae on at this rate. And what base carle are ye, whom he has sent on sic a fule's errand?"

"I'm Rory Blare, the town-piper o' Mucklebrowst, if it like your honour," was the reply; "I hae the blessed pipes o' St. Fillan wi' me, and I'll gie ye ane of the Saunt's ain sangs by which he drave awa' the deil on the chanter, an ye wad like to listen till it."

There was something in this proposal not very pleasing to the long-bearded baron, since he ground his teeth and grinned fearfully upon the piper, and roared out fiercely to Nickie Deilstyke to take the canting dog down to the revel in the courtyard, and show him where Cummer Paddock hung her curch whilst she danced. Rory Blare followed the servitor through several winding passages, into what seemed to him a churchyard, surrounded by a ruined cloister, and part of an ancient chapel, with a running stream forming the lower boundary. Both the building itself, which appeared to be illuminated, and the grassy cemetery, were crowded with a host of females, young and old, fair and foul, dancing furiously to the sound of the deepest and shrillest pipes Rory had ever heard.

The tune in general was a loud and continued rant, held on in the same clamorous key, though it often swelled suddenly into a positive howl of wild merriment, increased by the shouts and shrieks of enraptured dancers; which, however, sounded in the piper's ears more like cries of pain than those hearty halloos of pleasure which distinguish the native dances of Scotland.

Rory's guide stopped at a whin-bush beside a fallen column, and pointing to a dark-coloured hood hanging upon it, directed the piper to seize it, and when the owner came up to make his own terms for its restoration, since she would never be able to quit that place without it. He had scarcely laid hold of it, and thrust it into his bosom under the Saint's pipes, when a woman, bent almost double, and with features

nearly resembling those of a toad, came up to him, and in a whining flattering voice entreated him to give it back ; adding, that she would give him many gifts, and specially teach him to play as never piper played before. All her entreaties, however, availing nothing until she produced Bauldie Quech's troth-pledge, the witch in a rage flung the broken coin upon the ground, exclaiming, " There, you suspicious tyke, will ye no gie me my curch now ? "

" Let's see if a' be right first, Luckie," answered the invincible piper, " all's not gowd that glitters, ye ken " ; and having taken the pledge from the ground, and satisfied himself that there was no deception, he thrust it into his breast, and approaching the running stream, drew out the witch's hood and hurled it in, saying, " There, cummer, as the gudeman at Mucklebrowst wants nae mair o' yere visits, we'll e'en tak awa' yere power o' making them ! "

The witch gave a wild shriek as she saw her magic curch sink down, with a dark flash of fire, in a place where she had no power to follow it ; knowing also that the loss of it involved her own instant destruction. A loud shout of exultation immediately arose from the wizard crowd, which came pouring down and whirled away the unfortunate Sibbie Carloups, who was never more seen on earth.

The music then changed to a brisk and sprightly tune, still frequently played in Scotland, though formerly condemned as an unhallowed spring—called " Whistle o'er the lave o't." This was a strain in which Rory was considered to have extraordinary skill ; and being animated by the well-known notes, and elated by his recent victory, he at once forgot his hazardous situation and the saintly character of his pipes ; and leaping up on the broken pillar he cried out, " Lilt awa', cummers, lilt awa' ! yon birkie blaws the chanter unco weel ; but I'd play that spring wi' Auld Clootie himsel, sae here goes till ye " ; but with the very first notes the bag of his instrument suddenly burst, and the pipes split from top to bottom ! " Deil's in't ! " exclaimed the alarmed Rory Blare, " if there's no an end o' the blessed pipes o' St. Fillan ! God hae us in his keeping ! what are we to do now ? "—but scarcely had he uttered the holy name when the whole scene was swept off in a howling whirlwind, and he saw no more till he found himself, at daybreak, lying with the broken pipes and the love-token, under the ancient walls of Glammis Castle, upwards of thirty miles distant from Mucklebrowst.

Having made the best of his way back to Bauldie Quech, he found

him quite another man, and joyfully preparing for his marriage with Janet Blythegilpie, of the East Green, it being already known that Sibbie Carloups had been carried away in a fearful storm of wind, on Hallowe'en, at midnight ; which the piper's story and the production of the broken sixpence were supposed entirely to confirm. It was never very clearly made out how long Rory Blare had been gone, where he had been, or who was the stranger by whose advice he went ; for, whilst the piper affirmed that he was absent but a single night, all Mucklebrowst declared that his office had been vacant for a week ; and that he was certainly away at the fearful season of Hallowe'en.

As to the second point, it was agreed that he had wandered to Forfar, or Glammis Castle, or perhaps had a drunken vision in the ruins of Restennet Priory. The howling of the wind through the arches, and his imagination, familiar with the superstitions of those places, might have supplied the witches, music, and revelry ; together with the revelation of that secret chamber, wherein Alexander, surnamed Beardie, third Earl of Crawford, is supposed to be playing at cards until the day of judgment. . And lastly, the person by whose counsel he went on the journey was very generally considered to be a famous white wizard, or benevolent magician, who used his art to counteract the powers of darkness.

Bauldie Quech became a person of consequence in Mucklebrowst, being made treasurer ; and his name yet lives in its traditions for having kept the municipal moneys in a manner worthy of the most primitive ages of the world. His depositories were nothing less than two large jack-boots, which hung beside his fireplace ; into one of which he threw all sums received, and into the other all his vouchers for payments.

At the end of the year both were emptied and a balance struck, though it is reported that, as there was some deficiency in the debtor-boot, it was thought more prudent to transfer the trust to other hands ; notwithstanding which, the ex-treasurer always asserted that it was the best way possible of keeping the accounts, since every one in his dwelling was of indubitable honesty, and " it saved a wheen hantle o' perplexing buiks and skarts o' writing." The good town also gave Rory Blare a new stand of pipes, by the first maker of his time, but they were never thought to be equal to those of St. Fillan ; and to his dying hour he could never be prevailed upon to play the 'witching tune of " Whistle o'er the lave o't."

THE HAUNTED HOGSHEAD

RICHARD THOMSON

Oh, wonderful! wonderful! and most wonderful, wonderful! and yet again wonderful! and after that, out of all whooping!—SHAKSPEARE.

YOU don't live to Boston, then, do you? No; I calculate you are from the old country, though you speak English almost as well as I do. Now, I'm a Kentucky man, and my father was to 'Big-bone Creek, in old Kentuck, where he could lather every man in the state, but I could lick my father. Well! when I first came to Boston, I guess, I was a spry, *active* young fellow, and cruel tall for my age; for it's a pretty considerable long time ago, I calculate. So first I goes to look out for Uncle Ben—you've heard of him and his brown *mar*, I reckon—and I finds Uncle Ben at Major Hickory's Universal Transatlantic Hotel, by Charles Bay, in East Boston, taking a grain of mighty fine elegant sangaree, with Judge Dodge and President Pinkney the Rowdey, that built the powerful large log mansion-house in Dog's Misery, in the salt-marshes out beyond Corlear's Hook, in New York. I was always a *leetle* bit of a favourite with Uncle Ben, and so he says to me:

"Jonathan W.," says he, for he calls me Jonathan W. for short; "I'll tell you what it is," says Uncle Ben, "you come out mighty bright this morning, I motion that you take a drop of whisky-toddy or so."

"Oh yes, Uncle Ben," says I; "I should admire to have a grain, if it's *handsom*."

"Considerably superb," says he; "it's of the first grade, I guess, for Major Hickory keeps wonderfully lovely liquors; and I can tell you a *genuine* good story about them, such as, I guess, you never heard before, since you was raised."

And then he up and told such a tale, that the helps all crowded round him to hear it, and swore it was better than a sermon, so it was. And as you're a *strannger* from the old country, and seem a right slick-away sort of a chap, without a bit of the gentleman about you, and are so mighty inquisitive after odd stories, why I don't mind

telling it to the 'Squire myself ; and you may depend upon it that it's as true and *genuine* as if you had heard it from Uncle Ben himself, or July White, his old woolly-headed nigger.

You must know, then, that the Universal Transatlantic Hotel was built an awful long time before I was raised ; though my Uncle Ben remembered a powerful grand wood house that stood there before it, which was called the Independent Star of Colombia, kept by Jacobus Van Soak, who came to Boston from the old, ancient, veteran Dutch settlers of New York. It was some time after fall in the year '77, that a mighty fierce squall of wind blew down some of the wall of the house where the cellar was, quite to the very foundation.

I reckon that the old host was a *leetle* bit madded at this, he was ; though he bit in his breath, and thought to drive in some new stakes, put up fresh clap-boards, and soon have it all slick and grand again ; but, in so doing, as he was taking out the piles underneath the house, what does he find but an awful great big barrel, and a cruel heavy one it was, and smelled like as if it was a hogshead of astonishingly mighty fine old ancient rum. I'll lay you'll never guess how they got it out of the cellar, where they found it, because they never moved it at all, I calculate ; though some of the helps and neighbours pulled and tugged at it like *natur* !

But the more they worked, the more the barrel wouldn't move ; and my Uncle Ben said that mighty *strannge* sounds came out of it, just as if it didn't like to be disturbed and brought into the light ; and that it swore at the helps and niggers in English and Spanish, Low German and High Dutch. At last, old Van Soak began to be a *leetle* bit *afear'd*, and was for covering it up again where he found it, till my Uncle Ben vowed it shouldn't be buried without his having a drop out of it, for he was a bold *active* man, that cared for nothing, and loved a grain of rum, or sangaree, or whisky-toddy, or crank, or any other *fogmatic*, to his heart, he did. So down in the cellar he sets himself, drives a spigot into the barrel, and draws him a glass of such mighty fine elegant rum, as was never seen before-in all Boston.

" Handsom ! considerably handsom ! mighty smart rum, I guess," says my Uncle Ben, as he turned it down ; " mild as mother's milk, and bright as a flash of lightning ! By the pipe of St. Nicholas, I must have another grain ! "

So he filled him another glass, and then Jacobus plucked up heart, and he took a grain or two, and the helps and bystanders did the same,

and they all swore it was superbly astonishing rum, and as old as the Kaatskill mountains, or the days of Wouter Van Twiller, the first Dutch Governor of New York.

Well ! I calculate that they might at last be a *leettle* bit staggered, for the rum ran down like water, and they drank about, thinking, you see, that all the strength was gone ; and as they were in the dark cellar, they never knew that the day was progressing powerfully fast towards night ; for now the barrel was quiet again, and they began to be mighty merry together. But the night came on cruel smart and dark, I reckon, with a pretty terrible loud storm ; and so they all thought it best to keep under shelter, and especially where such good stuff was to be had free, gratis, for nothing, into the bargain.

Nobody knows now what time it was, when they heard a mighty fierce knocking on the top of the barrel, and presently a hoarse voice from the inside cried out, " Yo ho, there, brothers ! open the hatchway and let me out ! " which made them all start, I calculate, and sent Van Soak reeling into a dark corner of the cellar, considerably out of his wits with fright and stout old rum.

" Don't open the hogshead," cried the helps and neighbours, in mighty great fear ; " it's the Devil ! "

" Potstausend ! " says my Uncle Ben—for you must know that he's a roistering High-German :—" You're a cowardly crew," says he, " that good liquor's thrown away upon."

" Thunder and storm ! " called out the voice again from the barrel, " why the Henker don't you unship the hatches ? Am I to stay here these hundred years ? "

" Stille ! mein Herr ! " says my Uncle Ben, says he, without being in the least bit *afear'd*, only a *leettle* maddened and wondered he was ; " behave yourself handsom, and don't be in such a pretty particular considerable hurry. I'll tell you what it is ; before you come out I should like to make an *enquerry* of you :—Who are you ? where were you raised ? how have you got along in the world ? and when did you come here ? Tell me all this *speedily*, or I shall decline off letting you out, I calculate."

" Open the hogshead, brother ! " said the man in the tub, says he, " and you shall know all, and a pretty considerable sight more ; and I'll take mighty good care of you for ever, because you're an awful smart, right-slick-away sort of a fellow, and not like the cowardly land-lubbers that have been sucking away my rum with you."

"Hole mich der Teufel!" said my Uncle Ben, "but this is a real rig'lar Yankee spark, a tarnation stout blade, who knows what a bold man should be; and so, by the Henker's horns, I'll let him out at once."

So, do you see, Uncle Ben made no more ado but broke in the head of the barrel; and what with the storm out of doors, and the laughing and swearing in the cask, a mighty elegant noise there was while he did it, I promise you: but at last there came up out of the hogshead a short, thick-set, truculent, sailor-looking fellow, dressed in the old ancient way, with dirty slops, tarnished gold-laced hat, and blue, stiff-skirted coat, fastened up to his throat with a mighty sight of brass buttons, Spanish steel pistols in a buffalo belt, and a swingeing cutlass by his side.

He looked one of the genuine privateer, bulldog breed, and his broad swelled face, where it was not red with rage, or the good rum, was black or purple; marked, I reckon, with a pretty considerable many scars, and his eyes were almost starting out of his head.

If the helps and neighbours were *afeard* before, they were now astounded outright, I calculate; and 'specially so when the *strannge* sailor got out of his hogshead, and began to lay about him with a fist as hard and as big as a twelve-pounder cannon-shot, crying like a bull-frog in a swamp,—“Now I shall clear out! A plague upon ye all for a crew of cowardly, canting, lubberly knaves! I might have been sucked dry, and staid in the barrel for ever, if your comrade had borne no stouter a heart than you did.”

Well, I guess, that by knocking down the helps and the neighbours he soon made a clear ship; and then, striding up to my Uncle Ben, who warn't not at all *afeard*, but was laughing at the fun, he says to him, says he, “As for you, brother, you're a man after my own kidney, so give us your fin, and we'll soon be sworn friends, I warrant me.”

But as soon as he held out his hand, Uncle Ben thought he saw in it the mark of a red horse-shoe, like a brand upon a nigger, which some do say was the very stamp that the Devil put upon Captain Kidd, when they shook hands after burying his treasure at Boston, before he was hanged.

“Hagel!” says my Uncle Ben, says he, “what's that in your right hand, my friend?”

“What's that to you?” said the old sailor. “We mariners get many a broad and deep red scar, without talking about, or marking

them ; but then we get the heavy red gold, and broad pieces along with them, and that's a tarnation smart plaster, I calculate."

"Then," says my Uncle Ben again, says he, "may I make an *enquerry* of you? Where were you *raised*? and who's your *Boss*?"

"Oh!" says the sailor, "I was born at Nantucket, and Cape Cod, and all along shore there, as the nigger said; and for the Captain I belong to, why, he's the chief of all the fierce and daring hearts which have been in the world ever since time began."

"And, pray, where's your *plunder*?" says my Uncle Ben to the *strannge* sailor; "and how long have you been in that hogshead?"

"Over long, I can tell you, brother; I thought I was never going to come out, I calculate. As for my plunder, I reckon I don't show everybody my locker; but you're a bold fellow enough, and only give me your paw to close the bargain and I'll fill your pouch with dollars for life. I've a stout ship and comrades ready for sea, and there's plunder everywhere for lads of the knife and pistol, I reckon; though the squeamish Lord Bellamont does watch them so closely."

"Lord who?" says Uncle Ben, a *leetle* bit madded and wondered.

"Why, Lord Bellamont, to be sure," answered the *strannge* sailor, "the English Governor of New England, and Admiral of the seas about it, under King William the Third."

"Governor and Admiral in your teeth!" says my Uncle Ben again; for now his pluck was up, and there warn't no daunting him then; "what have we to do with the old country, your kings, or your governors? this is the Free City of Boston, in the Independent United States of America, and the second Year of Liberty, Seventy-seven, I reckon. And as for your William the Third, I guess he was dead long before I was raised, and I'm no cockerell. I'll tell you what it is, now, my smart fellow, you've got pretty considerably drunk in that rum cask, if you've been there ever since them old ancient days; and, to speak my mind plain, you're either the Devil or Captain Kidd. But I'd have you to know, I'm not to be scared by a face of clay, if you were both; for I'm an old Kentuck Rowdey, of Townfork by the Elkhorn; my breed's half a horse and half an alligator, with a cross of the earthquake! You can't poke your fun at me, I calculate; and so, here goes upon you for a villain, any way!"

My Uncle Ben's pluck was now all up; for pretty considerably madded he was, and could bite in his breath no longer; so he flew upon the *strannge* sailor, and walked into him like a flash of lightning

into a gooseberry-bush, like a mighty, smart, *active* man as he was. Hold of his collar laid my Uncle Ben, and I reckon they did stoutly struggle together for a *tarnation* long time, till at last the mariner's coat gave way, and showed that about his neck there was a halter, as if he had been only fresh cut down from the gibbet ! Then my Uncle Ben *did* start back a pace or two, when the other let fly at him with a pretty considerable hard blow, and so laid him right slick sprawling along upon the ground.

Uncle Ben said he never could guess how long they all laid there ; but when they came to, they found themselves all stretched out like dead men by the niggers of the house, with a staved rum cask standing beside them. But, now—mark you this well—on one of the head-boards of the barrel was wrote, “ W. K. The Vulture. 1701,” which was agreed by all to stand for William Kidd, the Pirate.

And July White, Uncle Ben's woolly-headed old nigger, said that he was once a loblolly-boy on board that very ship, when she was a sort of pickarooning privateer. Her crew told him that she sailed from the old country the very same year marked on the cask, when Kidd was hanged at Execution-Dock, and that they brought his body over to be near the treasure that he buried ; and as every one knows that Kidd was tied up twice, why, perhaps, he never died at all, but was kept alive in that mighty elegant rum cask, till my Uncle Ben let him out again, to walk about New York and Boston, round Charles Bay and Cape Cod, the Old Sow and Pigs, Hellegat, and the Hen and Chickens. There was a fat little Dutch Parson, who used to think that this story was only a mighty smart fable, because nobody could remember seeing the Pirate besides Uncle Ben ; and he would sometimes say, too, that they were all knocked down by the rum, and not by the Captain, though he never told Uncle Ben so, I calculate ; for he always stuck to it handsomely, and wouldn't 'bate a word of it for nobody.

When Uncle Ben had finished, he says, “ Jonathan W.,” says he, “ I'll tell you what it is : I'll take it as a *genuine* favour if you'll pay Major Hickory for the sangaree and the toddy, and we'll be quits another day.”

And so I paid for it every cent ; but would you believe it ? though I've asked him for it a matter of twenty times, and more than that, Uncle Ben never gave me back the trifle that he borrowed of me from that day to this !

DAVID MACBETH MOIR

1798-1851

THE LAIRD'S DINNER-PARTY

FROM "MANSIE WAUCH"

IN this family history it becomes me, as an honest man, to make passing mention of my faither's sister, auntie Mysie, that married a carpenter and undertaker in the town of Jedburgh; and who, in the course of nature and industry, came to be in a prosperous and thriving way; indeed, so much so, as to be raised from the rank of a private head of a family, and at last elected, by a majority of two votes, a member of the town council itself.

Well, ye see, some great lord—I forget his name, but no matter—that had made a most tremendous sum of money, either by foul or fair means, among the blacks in the East Indies, had returned, before he died, to lay his bones at home, as yellow as a Limerick glove, and as rich as Dives in the New Testament. He kept flunkies with plush small-clothes, and sky-blue coats with scarlet-velvet cuffs and collars,—lived like a princie,—and settled in the neighbourhood of Jedburgh.

The body, though as brown as a toad's back, was as prideful and full of power as auld King Nebuchadneisher; and how to exhibit all his purple and fine linen, he ay thought and better thought, till at last the happy determination came over his mind like a flash of lightning to invite the bailies, deacons, and town council, all in a body, to come and dine with him.

Save us! what a brushing of coats, such a switching of stoury trowsers, and bleaching of white cotton stockings as took place before the catastrophe of the feast, never before happened since Jeddart was a burgh. Some of them that were forward and geyan bold in the spirit, crawled aloud for joy at being able to boast that they had received an invitation letter to dine with a great lord; while others, as proud as peacocks of the honour, yet not very sure as to their being up to the trade of behaving themselves at the tables of the great, were mostly dung stupid with not kenning what to think.

A council meeting or two took place in the gloamings, to take such a serious business into consideration; some expressing their fears

and inward doun-sinking, while others cheered them up with a fillip of pleasant consolation. Scarcely a word of the matter for which they were summoned together by the town offisher—and which was about the mending of the old bell rope—was discussed by any of them. So after a sowl of toddy was swallowed, with the hopes of making them brave men and good soldiers of the magistracy, they all plucked up a proud spirit, and, do or die, determined to march in a body up to the gate and forward to the table of his lordship.

My uncle, who had been one of the ringleaders of the chicken-hearted, crap away up among the rest, with his new blue coat on, shining fresh from the ironing of the goose, but keeping well among the thick, to be as little kenspeckle as possible ; for all the folk of the town were at their doors and windows to witness the great occasion of the town council going away up like gentlemen of rank to take their dinner with his lordship. That it was a terrible trial to all cannot be for a moment denied ; yet some of them behaved themselves decently ; and if we confess that others trembled in the knees as if they were marching to a field of battle, it was all in the course of human nature.

Yet ye would wonder how they came on by degrees ; and, to cut a long tale short, at length found themselves in a great big room, like a palace in a fairy tale, full of grand pictures with gold frames, and looking-glasses like the side of a house, where they could see down to their very shoes. For a while they were like men in a dream, perfectly dazzled and dumfounded ; and it was five minutes before they could either see a seat or think of sitting down.

With the reflection of the looking-glasses one of the bailies was so possessed within himself that he tried to chair himself where chair was none, and landed, not very softly, on the carpet ; while another of the deacons, a fat and dumpy man, as he was trying to make a bow and throw out his leg behind him, tramped on a favourite Newfoundland dog's tail, that, wakening out of its slumbers with a yell that made the roof ring, played drive against my uncle, who was standing abaft, and wheeled him like a butterfly, side foremost, against a table with a heap o' flowers on't, where, in trying to kep himself, he drove his head like a battering-ram through a looking-glass and bleached back on his hands and feet on the carpet.

Seeing what had happened, they were all frightened ; but his lordship, after laughing heartily, was politer, and kent better about

manners than all that ; so bidding the flunkies hurry away with the fragments of the china jugs and jars, they found themselves, sweating with terror and vexation, ranged along silk settees, cracking about the weather and other wonderfals.

Such a dinner ! the fume of it went round about their hearts like myrrh and frankincense. The landlord took the head of the table ; the bailies the right and left of him ; the deacons and councillors were ranged along the sides, like files of sodgers ; and the chaplain at the foot said grace. It is entirely out of the power of man to set down on paper all that they got to eat and drink ; and such was the effect of French cookery, that they did not ken fish from flesh. Howsoever, for all that, they laid their lugs in everything that lay before them, and what they could not eat with forks they supped with spoons, so it was all to one purpose.

When the dishes were removing, each had a large blue glass bowl full of water, and a clean calendered damask towel, put down by a smart flunky before him ; and many of them that had not helped themselves well to the wine, while they were eating their steaks and French frigassees, were now vexed to death on that score, imagining that nothing remained for them but to dight their nebs and flee up.

Ignorant folk should not judge rashly, and the worthy town council were here in error ; for their surmises, however feasible, did the landlord wrong. In a minute they had fresh wine decanters ranged down before them, filled with liquors of all variety of colours, red, green, and blue ; and the table was covered with dishes full of jargonelles and pippins, raisins and almonds, shell-walnuts and plumdamases, and nut-crackers, and everything they could think of eating ; so that after drinking " The King, and long life to him," and " The constitution of the country at home and abroad," and " Success to trade," and " A good harvest," and " May ne'er waur be among us," and " Botheration to the French," and " Corny toes and short shoes to the foes of old Scotland," and so on, their tongues began at length not to be so tacked ; and the weight of their own dignity, that had taken flight before his lordship, came back and rested on their shoulders.

In the course of the evening his lordship whispered to one of the flunkies to bring in some things—they could not hear what—as the company might like them. The wise ones thought within themselves that the best aye comes hindmost ; so in brushed a powdered valet

with three dishes on his arm of twisted black things, just like sticks of Gibraltar-rock but different in the colour.

Bailie Bowie helped himself to a jargonelle, and Deacon Purvis to a wheen raisins ; and my uncle, to show that he was not frightened and kent what he was about, helped himself to one of the long black things, which, without much ceremony, he shoved into his mouth and began to eat. Two or three more, seeing that my uncle was up to trap, followed his example and chewed away like nine-year olds.

Instead of the curious-looking black thing being sweet as honey—for so they expected—they soon found they had caught a Tartar ; for it had a confounded bitter tobacco-taste. Manners, however, forbade them laying them down again, more especially as his lordship, like a man dumfounded, was aye keeping his eye on them. So away they chewed, and better chewed, and whammelled them round in their mouths, first in one cheek and then in the other, taking now and then a mouthful of drink to wash the trash down, then chewing away again, and syne another whammel from one cheek to the other, and syne another mouthful, while the whole time their een were staring in their heads like mad, and the faces they made may be imagined, but cannot be described.

His lordship gave his eyes a rub, and thought he was dreaming, but no—there they were bodily, chewing and whammelling and making faces ; so no wonder that, in keeping in his laugh, he sprung a button from his waistcoat, and was like to drop down from his chair through the floor in an ecstasy of astonishment, seeing they were all growing sea-sick and pale as stucco images.

Frightened out of his wits at last, that he would be the death of the whole council, and that more of them would pushion themselves, he took up one of the segars—every one knows segars now, for they are fashionable among the very sweeps—which he lighted at the candle, and commenced puffing like a tobacco-pipe.

My uncle and the rest, if they were ill before, were worse now ; so when they got to the open air, instead of growing better they grew sicker and sicker, till they were waggling from side to side like ships in a storm ; and, no kenning whether their heels or heads were uppermost, went spinning round about like pieries.

“ A little spark may make muckle wark.” It is perfectly wonderful what great events spring out of trifles, or what seem to common eyes but trifles. I do not allude to the nine days’ deadly sickness that was

the legacy of every one that ate his segar, but to the awful truth, that, at the next election of councillors, my poor uncle Jamie was completely blackballed—a general spite having been taken to him in the town-hall, on account of having led the magistracy wrong, by doing what he ought to have let alone, thereby making himself and the rest a topic of amusement to the world at large for many and many a month.

Others, to be sure, it becomes me to make mention, have another version of the story, and impute the cause of his having been turned out to the implacable wrath of old Bailie Bogie, whose best black coat, square in the tails, that he had worn only on the Sundays for nine year, was totally spoiled on their way home in the dark from his lordship's, by a tremendous blush that my unfortunate uncle happened, in the course of nature, to let flee in the frenzy of a deadly upthrowing.

LEITCH RITCHIE

1800-1865

THE CHEATERIE PACKMAN

IT was yet pretty early in the morning when I arrived at the Inn of Skreigh, and never having been in that part of the country before, my heart misgave me at the appearance of the house, and I thought that surely I had mistaken the road, an awful idea to a man who had walked twelve miles before breakfast ! It was a huge, grey, dismantled edifice, standing alone in a wild country, and presenting evident traces of a time when the *bawbees* of the traveller might have procured him lodgings within its walls for a longer period than suited his convenience.

On entering the parlour, although the "base uses" to which this ancient mansion had returned were clearly indicated by certain gill-stoups scattered about the dirty tables, yet the extraordinary size of the room, the lowness of the walls, and the scantiness of the furniture, kept up in my mind the associations which had been suggested by the exterior ; and it was not till the aroma of tea, and the still more "fragrant lunt" of a Finnan haddie had saluted my senses, that the visions of the olden time fled from my eyes.

While busy with my breakfast, another traveller came into the room. He had a pack on his back and an ell-wand in his hand, and appeared to be one of those travelling philanthropists—answering to the pedlars of the south—who carry into the holes and corners of the sylvan world the luxuries of the city. Our scene being on the *best* side of the Tweed, I need not say that the body had a sharp eye, an oily face, and a God-fearing look. He sat down over against me, upon one of the tables, to rest his pack, and from his shining shoes and orderly apparel, I judged that he had passed the night in the house, and was waiting to pay his score, and fare forth again upon his journey. There was, notwithstanding, a singular expression of fatigue on his yellow countenance.

A common observer would have guessed that he had been brim-*four* overnight and had risen before he had slept off the effects ; but to me, who am curious in such matters, there appeared a something in his

face which invested with a moral dignity an expression that would otherwise have been ludicrous or pitiable. Ever and anon he turned a longing eye upon the Finnan haddie, but as often edged himself with a jerk farther away from the temptation ; and whenever the landlady came into the room, his remonstrances on her delay, at first delivered in a moaning tone, became at last absolutely cankered.

The honest wife, however, appeared determined to extend the hospitality of breakfast to her guest, and made sundry lame excuses for not " bringing ben his score," while she was occupied in displaying upon my table, with the most tempting liberality, the various good things that constitute a Scottish breakfast.

" Are you not for breakfasting, good man," said I at length, " before you go forth this morning ? "

" No, please God," said he with almost a jump, " no carnal comfort shall pass my lips on this side the mill of Warlock ! "

" The mill of Warlock ! " repeated I with surprise, " that should be at least twelve miles from this—and I can tell you, my friend, it is not pleasant travelling so far on an empty stomach. If you have any urgent reason for an abstinence that we of the kirk of Scotland attach no merit to, you should not have loitered in bed till this hour."

The packman, at my reproof, put on a kind of *blate* look, but his features gathering gradually into solemnity—" Sir," said he, " I *have* urgent reasons for my conduct, and while this weary wife is making out my score, I will, if you desire it, tell you the story."

Having eagerly signified my assent, the packman wiped his glistening forehead, and with a heavy sigh began to discourse as follows :

" Aweel, sir—it was at this time yesterday morning I arrived at the mill of Warlock. The miller was out, and his wife, glad of the opportunity, rampaged over my pack like one demented. She made me turn out every article in my aught, and kept me bargaining about this and that, and flyting by the hour about the price ; and after all it came to pass that the jaud (God forgive me !) wanted naething of more value than three ells of ribbon ! You may be sure that I was not that pleased ; and what with fatigue, and what with my vexation, while I was measuring the ribbon, and the wife sklanting round at the looking-glass, I just clipped by mistake-like a half ell short. Aweel, ye'll say that was just naething after the fash I had had, and moreover I stoutly refused the second glass of whiskey she offered me to the douroch ; and so shouldering my pack again, I took the way in an evil hour to the Inn of Skreigh.

"It was late at night when I arrived here, and I had been on my legs all day, so that you may think my heart warmed to the auld biggin, and I looked forward to naething waur than a cozy seat by the ingle-side, or chat with the landlady—a douce woman, sir, and not aye so slow as the now, foul fa' her! (God forgive me!)—forbye, maybe, a half-mutchkin—or twa: and all these things of a truth I had. Not that I exceeded the second stoup, a practice which I hold to be *contra bonos mores*—but ye'll no understand Latin? ye'll be from the south? Aweel—but there was something mair, ye ken, quite as necessary for a Christian traveller and a wearied man; and at last, with a great gaunt, I speered at the serving hizzie for my bedroom.

"'Bedroom,' quo' she, 'ye'll no be ganging to sleep here the night?'

"'Atweel,' said the mistress, 'I am unco wae, but every room in the house is fu'. Hout! it's but a step to the town, no abune twal miles and a bittock—and ye ken every inch of the way as weel as the brass nails on your ell-wand.'

"I wish I may be forgi'en for the passion they put me intill! To think of sending me out such a gait my lane, and near the sma' hours!

"'O ye jaud!' cried I, 'if the gudeman was no in the yird the night, ye would crawl till a different tune!' and with that such a hullibulloo was raised among us, that at last the folks began to put in their shouthers at the door to speer what was the matter.

"'Aweel, aweel,' said the landlady, in the hinder end quite forfaughten, 'a wilfu' man maun hae his way. There is but ae room in the house where there is no a living soul, and it's naething but an auld lumber-room. However, if you can pass the time with another half-mutchkin while Jenny and me rig up the bed, it will be as much at your service as a decenter place.'

"And so, having gotten the battle, I sat myself down again, and Jenny brought in the other stoup—ye'll be saying that was the third; but there's nae rule without an exception, and moreover ye ken, 'three's aye canny.'

"At last and at length I got into my bedroom, and it was no that ill-looking at all. It was a good sizeable room, with a few sticks of old furniture, forbye a large old-fashioned bed. I laid my pack down, as is my custom, by the bedside, and after saying my prayers put out the candle and tumbled in.

"Aweel, sir, whether it was owing to my being over-fatigued, or to the third stoup in defiance of the proverb being no canny, I know

not, but for the life of me I could not sleep. The bed was not a bad bed, it was roomy and convenient, and there was not a wish in the house, and not a stime of light in the room. I counted over my bargains for the day, and half wished I had not made the mistake with the miller's wife ; I put my hand out at the stock of the bed and felt my pack, amusing myself by thinking what was this lump and that ; but still I could not sleep. Then by degrees my other senses, as well as the touch, wearied of being awake and doing nothing—fiend tak' them ! (God forgive me !)—sought employment. I listened, as if in spite of myself, to hear whether there was anything stirring in the house, and looked out of the curtains to see if any light came through the window chinks. Not a wish—not a stime ! Then I said my prayers over again, and began to wish grievously that the creature had her half ell of ribbon. Then my nose must needs be in the hobble, and I thought I felt a smell. It was not that bad a smell, but it was a smell I did not know and therefore did not like. The air seemed close—and feverish ; I threw off the bedclothes and began to puff and pant. I began to be afraid. The entire silence seemed strange, the utter darkness more strange, and the strange smell stranger than all. I at first grasped at the bedclothes, and pulled them over my head ; but I had bottled in the smell with me, and rendered intolerable by the heat, it seemed like the very essence of typhus. I threw off the clothes again in a fright. I would have given the world to have been able to rise and open the window, but the world would have been offered me in vain to do such a thing. I contented myself with flapping the sheet like a fan, and throwing my arms abroad to catch the wind.

“ My right hand, which was towards the stock of the bed, constantly lighted upon my pack, but my left could feel naething at all save that there was a space between the bed and the wall. At last, leaning more over in that direction than heretofore, my hand encountered something a little lower than the surface of the bed, and I snatched it back with a smothered cry. I knew no more than the man in the moon what the something was, but it sent a tingle through my frame, and I felt the sweat begin to break over my brow. I would have turned to the other side, but I felt as heavy, to my own muscles, as if I had been made of lead ; and, besides, a fearful curiosity nailed me to the spot. I persuaded myself that it was from this part of the bed that the smell arose. Soon, however, with a sudden desperation, I

plunged my hand again into the terrible abyss, and it rested upon a cauld, stiff, clammy face !

“ Now, sir, I would have you to ken, that although I cannot wrestle with the hidden sympathies of nature, I am not easily frightened. If the stoutest robber that ever wore breeks—aye, or ran bare, for there be such in the Hielands, was to lay a finger on my pack, I would haud on like grim death ; and it is not to tell, that I can flyte about ae bawbee with the dourest wife in the country-side ; but och, and alas ! to see me at that moment, on the braid of my back, with my eyes shut, my teeth set, and one hand on the physiog of a corp ! The greatest pain I endured was from the trembling of my body, for the motion forced my hand into closer connection with the horrors of its resting-place ; while I had no more power to withdraw it than if it had been in the thumb-screws.

“ And there I lay, sir, with my eyes steeked as if with screw-nails, my brain wandering and confused, and whole rivers of sweat spouting down my body, till at times I thought I had got fou and was lying sleeping in a ditch. To tell you the history of my thoughts at that time is impossible ; but the miller’s wife—woe be upon her !—she rode me like the night-hag. I think I must have been asleep a pãrt of the time, for I imagined that the wearisome half ell of ribbon was tied about my neck like a halter, and that I was on the eve of being choked. I ken not how long I tholed this torment ; but at last I heard voices and sounds, as if the sheriffs’ officers of hell were about me, and in a sudden agony of great fear I opened my eyes.

“ It was broad morning ; the sun was shining into the room ; and the landlady and her lasses were riving my hand from the face of the corpse. After casting a bewildered glance around, it was on that fearful object my eyes rested, and I recognised the remains of an old serving lass who it seems died the day before, and was huddled into that room to be out of the way of the company.”

At this moment the landlady entered the room with his score, and while the packman sat wiping his brow, entered upon her defence.

“ Ye ken, sir,” said she, “ that ye *wad* sleep in the house, and a wilfu’ man maun hae his way ; but had ye lain still, like an honest body wi’ a clean conscience, and no gaen rampaung about wi’ your hands where ye had no business, the feint a harm it would hae done ye ! ”

The packman only answered with a glance of ire, as he thundered down the bawbees upon the table, and turning one last look upon the Finnan haddie, groaned deeply, and went forth upon his journey.

JOHN MACKAY WILSON

1804-1885

ARCHY ARMSTRONG

FOR thirty years Sandy Armstrong of the Cleughfoot had been one of the most daring and successful freebooters of his clan. His name was a sound of terror on the Borders, and was alike disagreeable to Scotch and English ears ; for, like Ishmael, Sandy's hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him. His clan had been long broken and without a leader, and the Armstrongs were regarded as outlaws by both nations.

Cleughfoot, in which Sandy resided, was a small square building of prodigious strength ; around it was a courtyard, or rather an enclosure for cattle, surrounded by a massy wall, in which was an iron gate strong as the wall itself. The door of the dwelling was also of iron, and the windows, which were scarce larger than loopholes, were barred. It was generally known by the name of "*Lang Sandy's Keep*," and was situated on the side of the Tarras, about ten miles from Langholm. Around it was a desolate morass, the passes of which were known only to Sandy and his few followers, and beyond the morass was a decaying but almost impenetrable forest.

Sandy, like his forefathers, knew no law, save

The good old law—the simple plan—
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

He had had seven sons, and of these five had fallen while following him in the foray, the sixth had been devoured by a bloodhound, and he had but one, Archy, his youngest, left, to whom he could bequeath his stronghold, a fleet steed, and his sword. Land he had none, and he knew not its value ; he found it more profitable to levy blackmail, to the right and to the left, on Englishman and on Scot ; and he laughed at the authority of Elizabeth and of James, and defied the power of the Wardens of their Marches.

"Bess may be Queen o' England," said he, "and buik-learned Jamie, King o' braid Scotland, but Sandy Armstrong is lord o' the wilds o' Tarras."

On the death of Elizabeth, Sandy and his handful of retainers had been out in the raid to Penrith ; in that desperate attempt some of them had fallen, and others had been seized and executed at Carlisle. But Sandy had escaped, driving his booty through the wilds before him to Cleughfoot. On one side of the courtyard stood a score of oxen and six fleet steeds, and on the other was provender for them for many days.

On the flat roof of Cleughfoot Keep sat Sandy Armstrong ; before him was a wooden stoup filled with *aqua vitæ*, and in his hand he held a small quegh, neatly hooped round, and formed of wood of various colours. It had a short handle for the finger and thumb, was about two inches in diameter, and three-quarters of an inch in depth, and out of this vessel Sandy, ever and anon, quaffed his strong potations, while his son, Archy, a boy of twelve years old, stood by his side, receiving from his parent a Borderer's education.

But, leaving the freebooter and his son on the turret of their fastness, we shall also, for a few moments, leave Dunfriesshire, and carrying back our narrative for some weeks, introduce the reader to the ancient town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.

On Wednesday, the 8th of April, 1603, every soul in the good town of Berwick was up by daybreak : wife and maiden flaunted in their newest gowns, with ample fardingales, and the sweating mechanic looked as spruce in his well-brushed "jack," as a courtly cavalier. By sunrise, the cannon thundered from the ramparts.

Before noon, the Marshal, Sir John Carey, at the head of the garrison, composed of horse and foot, marched out of the town towards Lamberton, firing *feux-d'-joie* as they went, while the cannon still pealed and the people shouted. The thunder of the artillery became more frequent—the bells rang merrily—the volleys of the garrison became louder and more loud, as though they again approached, and "He comes!—He comes!" shouted the crowd ; "Hurra ! Hurra !—the King ! the King !"

The garrison again entered the town, they filed to the right and left, lining the street. In front of Marygate stood William Selby, the gentleman porter, with the keys of the town. The voice of the artillery, the muskets, and the multitude, again mingled together. James of Scotland and of England stood before the gate—Selby bent upon his knee, he placed the keys of the town in the hands of the monarch, who instantly returned them, saying :

" Rise, Sir William Selby, an' saul o' me, man, but ye should tak' it as nae sma' honour to be the first knight made by James, by the grace of God, an' the love o' our gracious cousin, King o' England an' Scotland likewise."

His Majesty, followed by the multitude, proceeded down Marygate, through the files of the garrison, to the market-place, where the worshipful Hugh Gregson, the mayor, his brother aldermen, the bailiffs, and others of the principal burgesses, waited to receive him. The mayor knelt and presented him with a purse of gold and the corporation's charter.

" Ye are a leal and considerate gentleman," said the King, handing the purse to one of his attendants—" worthy friends are ye a' ; and now take back your charter, an' ye sall find in us a gracious and affectionate sovereign, ready to maintain the liberty and privileges it confers upon our trusty subjects o' our town o' Berwick."

Mr. Christopher Parkinson, the recorder, then delivered a set and solemn speech, after which the King proceeded to the church, where the Rev. Toby Mathews, Bishop of Durham, preached a sermon suited to royal ears. On the following day, the demonstrations of rejoicing were equally loud, and His Majesty visited the garrison and fortifications ; and as he walked upon the ramparts surrounded by lords from Scotland and from England, and while the people shouted, and the artillery belched forth fire, smoke, and thunder, the monarch, in order to give an unquestionable demonstration of his courage in the presence of his new subjects, boldly advanced to the side of one of the cannon and took the match from the hands of the soldier who was about to fire it. Once—twice—thrice, the monarch stretched forth his hand to the touch-hole, but touched it not. It was evident the royal hand trembled—the royal eyes were closed—yea, the royal cheeks became pale.

At length the quivering match touched the powder, back bounded the thundering cannon, and back sprang the terrified monarch, knocking one of his attendants down—dropping the match upon the ground, and thrusting his fingers in his ears—stammering out, as plainly as his throbbing heart would permit, that " he feared their drum was split in twa ! "

Scarce had His Majesty recovered from this demonstration of his bravery, when a messenger arrived with the intelligence that the Armstrongs and other clans had committed grievous depredations on

the Borders, and had even carried their work of spoliation and plunder as far as Penrith.

"Borders, man!" quoth the King, "our kingdom hath nae *borders* but the sea. It is our royal pleasure that the word *borders* sall never mair be used: wat ye not that what were the *extremities* or *borders* o' the twa kingdoms, are but the *middle* o' our kingdom, an' in future it is our will an' decree that ye ca' them nae langer the Borders, but the *middle* counties. An' now, Sir William Selby, as we were graciously pleased yesterday, by our ain hand, to confer on ye the high honour o' knighthood, take ye twa hundred and fifty horsemen, and gae ye up our middle counties, commanding every true man in our name capable o' bearing arms to join ye in crushing and in punishing sic thieves and rievers; hang ilka Armstrong and Johnstone amang them that resists our royal will—an' mak' the iron yetts o' their towers be converted into ploughshares. Awa, sir, an' do your work surely an' right quickly."

On the following day Sir William Selby set out upon his mission; and before he had proceeded far, he found himself at the head of a thousand horsemen. They burned and destroyed the strongholds of the Borderers as they went, and the more desperate amongst them who fell into their hands were sent in fetters to Carlisle.

It was early in May, and the young leaves, bursting into beauty and being, were spreading their summer livery over Tarras forest, and the breeze wafted their grateful fragrance over the morass; even on the morass itself a thousand simple flowers, like fragments of beauty scattered in handfuls amidst the widespread desolation, peeped forth; and over the sharp cry of the wheeling lapwing rang the summer hymn of the joyful lark, when, as we have said before, Sandy Armstrong sat on the turret of Cleughfoot with his son by his side.

"Archy," said the freebooter, "this warld is turning upside down, an' honest men ha'e nae chance in't. We hear o' naething now but law! law! law!—but the fient a grain o' justice is to be met wi' on the Borders. A man canna tak' a bit beast or twa in an honest way, or mak' a bonfire o' an enemy's haystack, but there's naethin' for't but Carlisle and a hempen cravat. But mind, callant, ye ha'e the bluid o' the Armstrongs in your veins, and their hands never earned bread by ony instrument but the sword, and it winna be the son o' Sandy o' Cleughfoot that will disgrace his kith and kin by trudging at a ploughtail or learning some beggarly handicraft. Swear to me,

Archy, that ye will live by the sword like your faithers afore ye—swear to your faither, callant, an' fear neither Jamie Stuart, his twa kingdoms, nor his horsemen,—they'll hae' stout hearts that cross Tarras moss, and there will be few sheep in Liddesdale before the pot at Cleughfoot need nae skimming."

"I will live like my faither before me—king o' Tarras-side," said the youth.

"That shall ye, Archy," rejoined the freebooter; "an' though the Scotts an' the Elliotts may, like fause louns, mak' obeisance to the king, and get braid lands for bending their knees, what cares Sandy Armstrong for their lands, their manrents, or their sheep-skins, scrawled owre by a silk-fingered monk?—his twa-handed blade and his Jeddart-staff shall be a better title to an Armstrong than an acre o' parchment."

The boy caught the spirit of his sire, and flourished his Jedburgh-staff, or battle-axe, in his hand. The father raised the quegh to his lips—"Here's to ye, Archy," he cried, "ye'll be cooper o' Fogo!"

He crossed his arms upon his breast—he sat thoughtful for a few minutes, and again added:

"Archy—but my heart fills to look on ye—ye are a brave bairn, but this is nae langer the brave man's country. Courage is persecuted, and knaves only are encouraged that can scribble like the monks o' Melrose. Ye had sax brithers, Archy—sax lads whase marrows warnæ to be found on a' the lang Borders: wi' them at my back, an' I could ha'e ridden north an' south, an' made the name o' Sandy Armstrong be feared; but they are gane—they're a' gane, and there's nane left but you to protect and defend your poor mother when I am gane too; and now they would hunt me like a deer if they durst, for they are butchering guid and true men for our bit raid to Penrith, as though the life o' an Armstrong were o' less value than an English nowt. If ye live to be a man, Archy, and to see your poor auld mother's head laid in the mould, tak' my sword and leave this poor, pitifu', king-ridden, an' buik-ruined country; an' dinna ye disgrace your faither by makin' bickers like the coopers o' Nicolwood, or pinglin' wi' an elshin like the souters o' Selkirk."

The sluth-dog, which lay at their feet, started up, snuffed the air, growled and lashed its tail. "Ha! Tiger! what is't, Tiger?" cried Sandy, addressing the dog, and springing to his feet.

"Troopers! troopers, faither!" cried Archy, "an' they are comin' frae ilka side o' the forest."

"Get ready the dags,¹ Archy," said the freebooter; "it's twa lang spears' length to the bottom o' Tarras moss, an' they'll be light men and lighter horses that find na a grave in't. Get ready the dags, and could lead shall welcome the first man that mentions King Jamie's name before the walls o' Cleughfoot."

The boy ran and brought his father's pistols—his mother accompanied him to the turret. She gazed earnestly on the threatening bands of horsemen as they approached, for a few seconds, then taking her husband's hand—"Sandy," said she, "I ha'e lang looked for this; but others that are wives the now shall gang widows to bed the night as weel as Elspeth Armstrong!"

"Fear naething, Elspeth, my doo," replied the riever; "there will be blood in the way if they attack the lion in his den. But there's a lang and tangled moss atween them an' Cleughfoot. We ha'e seen an enemy nearer an' be glad to turn back again."

"They will reach us, faither," cried Archy; "do ye no see they ha'e muffled men before them?"

"Muffled men! then, bairn, your faither's betrayed!" exclaimed the freebooter, "an' there's naething but revenge and death left for Sandy Armstrong!"

He stalked rapidly around the turret—he examined his pistols, the edge of his sword, his Jedburgh-staff, and his spear. Elspeth placed a steel cap on his head, and, from beneath it, his dark hair, mingled with grey, fell upon his brow. He stood with his ponderous spear in one hand and a pistol in the other, and the declining sun cast his shadow across the moss to the very horses' feet of his invaders.

Still the horsemen, who amounted to several hundreds, drew nearer and nearer on every side, and impenetrable as the morass was to strangers, yet, by devious windings, as a hound tracks its prey, the muffled men led them on, till they had arrived within pistol shot of Cleughfoot.

"What want ye, friends?" shouted the outlaw; "think ye that a poor man like Sandy Armstrong can gi'e upputtin' and provender for five hundred horse?"

"We come," replied an officer, advancing in front of the company, "by the authority o' our gracious prince, James, King o' England and Scotland, and in the name o' his commissioner, Sir William Selby, to punish and hand over to justice Border thieves and outlaws, o' whom

¹ Pistols.

we are weel assured that you, Sandy Armstrong, o' the Cleughfoot, are, habit and repute, amangst the chief."

"Ye lie! ye lie!" returned the outlaw; "ye dyvors in scarlet and cockades, ye lie! I hae lived thir fifty years by my ain hand, an' the man was never born that dared say Sandy Armstrong laid finger on the widow's cow or the puir man's mare, or that he scrimpit the orphan's meal. But I hae been a protector o' the poor and helpless, an' a defender o' the cowan-hearted, for a sma' but honest blackmail, that other men, wi' no half the strength o' Sandy Armstrong, wadna ta'en up at their feet."

"Do ye surrender in peace, ye boastin' rebel?" replied the herald, "or shall we burn your den about your ears?"

"I ken it is death ony way ye tak' it," rejoined the outlaw—"ye would show me an' mine the mercy that was shown to my kinsman, John o' Gilnokie, an' I shall surrender as an Armstrong surrenders—when the breath is out."

Fire flashed from a narrow crevice which resembled a cross in the turrets—the report of a pistol was heard, and the horse of the herald bounded, and fell beneath him.

"That wasna done like an Armstrong, Archy," said the freebooter; "ye hae shot the horse, an' it might hae been the rider—the man was but doing his duty, an' it was unfair and cowardly to fire on him till the affray began."

"I shall mind again, faither," said Archy, "but I thought, wi' sic odds against us, that every advantage was fair."

While these events transpired, Elspeth was busied placing powder and balls upon the roof of the turret; she brought up also a carabine, and putting it in her husband's hands, said: "Tak' ye that, Sandy, to aim at their leaders, and gie Archy an' me the dags."

The horsemen encompassed the wall; Sandy, his wife, and his son, knelt upon the turret, keeping up, through the crevices, a hurried but deadly fire on the besiegers. It was evident the assailants intended to blow up the wall. The freebooter beheld the train laid, and the match applied. Already his last bullet was discharged.

"Let us fire the straw among the cattle!" cried little Archy.

"Weel thought, my bairn!" exclaimed the riever.

The boy rushed down into the house, and in an instant returned with a flaming pine torch in his hand. He dropped it amongst the cattle. He dashed a handful of powder on the spot, and in a moment

half of the courtyard burst into a flame. At the same instant a part of the court wall trembled—exploded—fell.

The horned cattle and the horses were rushing wildly to and fro through the fire. The invaders burst through the gap. Elspeth tore a pearl drop from her ears,¹ and, thrusting it into the pistol, discharged it at the head of the first man who approached the house. It was evident they intended to blow up the house, as they had done the wall. Sandy had now no weapon that he could render effective but his spear, and he said—"They shall taste the prick of the hedgehog before I dee."

He thrust it down furiously upon them, and several of them fell at his threshold; but the deadly instrument was grasped by a number of the besiegers, and wrenched from his hands.

The sun had already set, darkness was gathering over the morass, and still the fire burned, and the cattle rushed amongst the armed men in the courtyard.

"Elspeth," said the freebooter, "it is not your life they seek, and they canna hae the heart to harm our bairn. Gie me my Jeddart-staff in my hand—an' fareweel to ye, Elspeth—fareweel!—an eternal fareweel! Archy! fareweel, my gallant bairn!—never disgrace your faither!—but ye winna, ye winna; an' if I am murdered, mind ye revenge me, Archy! Now ye maun unbar the door, an' I maun cut my way through them or perish."

Thus spoke the Borderer; and, with his battle-axe in his hand, he embraced his wife and his son, and wept.

"Now, Archy," said he, "slip and open the door—saftly!—saftly!—an' let me rush out."

Archy silently drew back the massy bars; in a moment the iron door stood ajar, and Sandy Armstrong, battle-axe in hand, burst into the courtyard, and into the midst of his besiegers. There was not a man amongst them that had not heard of the "terrible Jeddart-staff o' Sandy Armstrong."

He cleaved them down before him—his very voice augmented their confusion—they shrank back at his approach; and while some fled from the infuriated cattle, others fled from the arm of the freebooter. In a few seconds he reached the gap in the court wall—he rushed upon the moss; darkness had begun, and a thick vapour

¹ The wives and daughters of the Borderers, at this period, wore numerous trinkets—spoils, no doubt, presented to them by their husbands and wooers.

was rising from the morass. "Follow me who dare!" shouted Sandy Armstrong.

Archy withdrew into a niche in the passage, as his father rushed out; and as the besiegers speedily burst into the house, amongst them was one of the muffled men¹ bearing a torch in his hand. Revenge fired the young Borderer, and, with his Jedburgh-staff, he made a dash at the hand of the traitor. The torch fell upon the floor, and with it three of the fingers that grasped it. The besiegers were instantly enveloped in gloom, and Archy, escaping from the niche from whence he had struck the blow, said unto himself—"I've gien ye a mark to find out wha ye are, neighbour."

The besiegers took possession of Cleughfoot, and the chief men of the party remained in it during the night, while a portion of their followers occupied the courtyard, and others, with their horses, remained on the morass. Archy and his mother were turned from their dwelling, and placed under a guard upon the moss, where they remained throughout the night; and, in the morning, Cleughfoot was blown up before them. They were conveyed as prisoners to Sir William Selby, who had fixed his quarters near Langholm.

"Whom do you bring me here?" inquired the new-made knight—"a wife and bairn! Hae ye been catching sparrows and let the eagle escape? Whare hae ye the head and the hand o' the outlaw?"

"Troth, Sir Knight," replied an officer, "and his head is where it shouldna be—on his ain shouthers. At the darkenin' he escaped upon the moss; three troopers, guided by a muffler an' a sluth-dog, pursued him; an' as we crossed the bog this mornin', we found ane o' the troopers sunk to the middle in't, an' his horse below him; an' farer on were the dead bodies o' the other twa, the sluth-dog, and the muffled man. I am sorry, therefore, to inform ye, Sir Knight, that Sandy Armstrong has escaped; but we hae made a bonfire o' his keep, an' brought ye his wife and his son—wha' are Armstrongs soul and body o' them—to do wi' them as ye may judge proper."

"Tuts, man," replied Sir William, "wad ye hae us to disgrace our royal commission by hangin' an auld wife an' a bairn? Gae awa, ye limmer ye—gae awa wi' your brat," he added, addressing Elspeth, "an' learn to live like honest folk; or if ye fa' in my way again, ye shall dance by the crook frae a woodie."

¹ A muffled man was one who, for his future safety, assumed a mask or disguise in leading the enemy to the haunts of his neighbours or associates whom he betrayed.

"Where can I gang?" said she, sorrowfully, as she withdrew. "O Archy! we hae neither house nor hauld—friend nor kindred!—an' wha will shelter the wife and bairn o' poor persecuted Sandy Armstrong?"

"Dinna fret, mother," said Archy; "though they hae burned Cleughfoot, the stanes are still left, an' I can soon big a bit place to stop in; nor, while there's a hare in Tarras wood, or a sheep on the Leadhills, shall ye ever want, mother."

They returned in sorrow to the heap of ruins that had been their habitation; and Elspeth, in the bitterness of her spirit, sat down upon the stones and wept. But after she had wept long, and the sound of her lamentation had howled across the desert, she arose and assisted her son in constructing a hut from the ruins, in which they might lay their heads. In two days it was completed, but, on the third day, the disconsolate wife of the freebooter sank on her bed of rushes, and the sickness of death was in her heart.

"Oh, speak to me, mother!" cried Archy; "what—what can I do for ye?"

"Naethin', my bairn!—naethin'!" groaned the dying woman—"the sun's fa'in' dark on the een o' Elspeth Armstrong; but, oh, may the saunts o' heaven protect my poor Archy!"

She tried to repeat the only prayer she had ever learned—for religion was as little understood in the house of a freebooter as the eighth commandment. Poor Archy wrung his hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Dinna dee, mither—oh! dinna dee!" he exclaimed, "or what will become o' your Archy!"

He rushed from the hut, and with a broken vessel which he had found among the ruins, he brought water from the rivulet. He applied it to her lips—he bathed her brow—"O mither! mither, dinna dee!" he cried again, "and I will get you bread too!"

He again hurried from the hut, and bounded across the moss with the fleetness of a young deer. It was four long miles to the nearest habitation, and in it dwelt Rangan Scott, a dependant of the Buccleuchs. There had never been friendship between his family and that of Sandy Armstrong, but, in the agony of Archy's feelings, he stopped not to think of that nor of aught but his dying mother. He rushed into the house—"Gie me bread!" he exclaimed wildly—"for the love o' heaven gie me bread, for my mither is perishin'!"

"Let her perish!—an' may ye a' perish!" said a young man, the son of Ringan, who stood by the fire with his right hand in a sling, "ye's get nae bread here."

"I maun!—I shall!" cried Archy, vehemently. Half of a coarse cake lay upon the table; he snatched it up, and rushed out of the house. They pursued him for a time, but affection and despair gave wings to his speed. Breathless, he reached the wretched hut, and, on entering, he cried—"Mither, here is bread!—I hae gotten't!—I hae gotten't!"

But his mother answered him not.

"Speak, mither! O mither, speak! here is bread now—eat it an' ye'll be better," he cried, but his mother was still silent.

He took her hand in his—"Are ye sleepin', mither?" he added—"here is bread!" He shook her gently, but she stirred not. He placed his hand upon her face; it was cold as the rude walls of the hut, and her extended arms were stiff and motionless. He raised them, and they fell heavily and lifeless.

"Mither!—mither!" screamed Archy; but his mother was dead! He rushed from the hut wildly, tearing his hair—he flung himself upon the ground—he called upon his father, and the gñens of Tarras echoed the cry; but no father was near to answer. He flew back to the hut. He knelt by his mother's corpse—he rubbed her face and her bosom—he placed his lips to hers, and again he invoked her to speak.

Night drew on, and, as darkness fell over the ghastly features of the corpse, he fled with terror from the hut, and wandered weeping throughout the night upon the moss. At sunrise he returned, and again sat down and wept by the dead body of his mother. He became familiar with death, and his terror died away. Two nights more passed on, and the boy sat in the desolate hut in the wilderness, watching and mourning over the lifeless body of his mother.

On the fourth day, he took a fragment of the iron gate, and began to dig her grave. He raised the dead body in his arms, and weeping, screaming, as he went, he bore it to the tomb he had prepared for it. He gently placed it in the cold earth, and covered it with the moss and the green sod. All the day long he toiled in rolling and carrying stones from the ruins of his father's house, to erect a cairn over his mother's grave. When his task was done, he wrung his hands, and

exclaimed, " Now, poor Archy Armstrong hasna a friend in the wide world ! "

While he yet stood mourning over the new-made grave, a party of horsemen, who were still in quest of his father, rode up and accosted him. His tragic tale was soon told, and, in the bitterness of his heart he accused them as being the murderers of his father and his mother. Amongst them was one of the chief men of the Elliott clan, who held lands in the neighbourhood. He felt compassion for Archy, and he admired his spirit ; and, desiring him to follow him, he promised to provide for him. Archy reluctantly obeyed, and he was employed to watch the sheep of his protector on the hills.

Eighteen years passed away. Archy was now thirty years of age ; he had learned to read, and even to write, like the monks that were in Melrose. He was the principal herdsman of his early benefactor, and was as much beloved as his father had been feared. But at times the spirit of the freebooter would burst forth ; and he had not forgiven the persecutors, or, as he called them, the murderers of his parents. Amongst these was one called " Fingerless Dick," the son of Ringan Scott, of whom we have spoken. Archy had long known that he was one of the muffled men who had conducted Selby's horsemen to his father's house, and that he was the same from whose hand he dashed the torch with his battle-axe. Now there was to be a football fray in Liddesdale, and the Borderers thronged to it from many miles. Archy was there, and there also was his enemy—" Fingerless Dick."

They quarrelled—they closed—both came to the ground, but Scott was undermost. He drew his knife—he stabbed his antagonist in the side—he was repeating the thrust, when Archy wrenched the weapon from his hand, and, in the fury of the moment, plunged it in his breast. At first the wound was believed to be mortal, and an attempt was made to seize Archy, but, clutching an oaken cudgel from the hands of one who stood near him—" Lay hands on me wha dare ! " he cried, as he brandished it in the air, and fled at his utmost speed.

Archy knew that though his enemy might recover, the Scotts would let loose the tender mercies of the law upon his head, and instead of returning to the house of his master, he sought safety in concealment.

On the third day after the fray in Liddesdale, he entered Dumfries. He was weary and wayworn, for he had fled from hill to hill, and from

glen to glen, fearing pursuit. He inquired for a lodging, and was shown to a small house near the foot of a street leading to the river, and which, we believe, is now called the Bank Vennel ; and in which, he was told, "the pig folk and other travellers put up for the night."

There was a motley group in the house,—beggars and chapmen—and amongst the former was an old man of uncommon stature ; and his hair, as white as snow, descended down upon his shoulders. His beard was of equal whiteness, and fell upon his breast. An old grey cloak covered his person, which was fastened round his body with a piece of rope instead of a girdle. He appeared as one who had been in foreign wars, and he wore a shade or patch over his left eye. He spoke but little, but he gazed often and wistfully on the countenance of Archy, and more than once a tear found its way down his weather-beaten cheeks. In the morning, when Archy rose to depart, "Whither gang ye, young man ?" inquired the old beggar, earnestly—"are ye for the north or for the south ?"

"Wherefore speer ye, auld man ?" replied Archy.

"I hae a cause, an' ane that winna harm ye," said the stranger, "if ye will thole an auld man's company for a little way."

Archy agreed that he should accompany him, and they took the road towards Annan together. It was a calm and glorious morning ; the Solway flashed in the sunlight like a silver lake, and not a cloud rested on the brow of the majestic Criffel. For the space of three miles they proceeded in silence, but the old man sighed oft and heavily, as though his spirit was troubled.

"Let us rest here for a few minutes," said he, as he sat down on a green knoll by the wayside, and gazing steadfastly in Archy's face—"Young man," he added, "your face brings owre my heart the memories o' thirty years—and, oh ! persecuted as the name is—answer me truly if your name be Armstrong ?"

"It is !" replied Archy, "and perish the son o' Sandy Armstrong when he disowns it !"

"An' your faither—your mother," continued the old man, hesitating as he spoke—"do they—does she live ?"

In a few words Archy told of his father's persecution—of his being hunted from the country like a wild beast—of the destruction of the home of his childhood—of his mother's death, and of her burial by his own hands in the wilderness.

" Oh ! my poor Elspeth ! " cried the beggar ; " Archy ! my son ! I am your faither ! Sandy Armstrong, the outlaw ! "

" My faither ! " exclaimed Archy, pressing the beggar to his breast. When they had wept together—" Let us gae nae farer south," said the old man, " but let us return to Tarras moss, that when the hand o' death comes, ye may lay me down in peace by the side of my Elspeth."

With a sorrowful heart Archy told his father that he was flying from the law and the vengeance of the Scotts. " Gie them gowd as a peace-offering," said the old man, and he pulled from beneath his coarse cloak a leathern purse, filled with gold, and placed it in the hands of his son. For nearly twenty years Sandy had served in foreign wars, and obtained honours and rewards ; and on visiting his native land, he had assumed the beggar's garb for safety. They returned to Tarras-side together, and a few yellow coins quashed the prosecution of " Fingerless Dick."

Archy married the daughter of his former employer, and became a sheep-farmer ; and at the age of fourscore years and ten, the old freebooter closed his eyes in peace in the house of his son, and in the midst of his grandchildren, and was buried, according to his own request, by the side of Elspeth in the wilderness.

DR. JOHN BROWN
1810-1882

RAB AND HIS FRIENDS

FOUR-AND-THIRTY years ago, Bob Ainslie and I were coming up Infirmary Street from the High School, our heads together, and our arms intertwined, as only lovers and boys know how, or why.

When we got to the top of the street, and turned north, we espied a crowd at the Tron Church. "A dog-fight!" shouted Bob, and was off; and so was I, both of us all but praying that it might not be over before we got up! And is not this boy-nature? and human nature too? and don't we all wish a house on fire not to be out before we see it? Dogs like fighting; old Isaac says they "delight" in it, and for the best of all reasons; and boys are not cruel because they like to see the fight. They see three of the great cardinal virtues of dog or man—courage, endurance, and skill—in intense action. This is very different from a love of making dogs fight, and enjoying, and aggravating, and making gain by their pluck. A boy—be he ever so fond himself of fighting—if he be a good boy, hates and despises all this, but he would have run off with Bob and me fast enough: it is a natural, and a not wicked interest, that all boys and men have in witnessing intense energy in action.

Does any curious and finely-ignorant woman wish to know how Bob's eye at a glance announced a dog-fight to his brain? He did not, he could not see the dogs fighting; it was a flash of an inference, a rapid induction. The crowd round a couple of dogs fighting is a crowd masculine mainly, with an occasional active, compassionate woman, fluttering wildly round the outside, and using her tongue and her hands freely upon the men, as so many "brutes"; it is a crowd annular, compact, and mobile; a crowd centripetal, having its eyes and its heads all bent downwards and inwards to one common focus.

Well, Bob and I are up, and find it is not over: a small thoroughbred white bull-terrier is busy throttling a large shepherd's dog, unaccustomed to war, but not to be trifled with. They are hard at it; the scientific little fellow doing his work in great style, his pastoral

enemy fighting wildly, but with the sharpest of teeth and a great courage. Science and breeding, however, soon had their own; the Game Chicken, as the premature Bob called him, working his way up, took his final grip of poor Yarrow's throat,—and he lay gasping and done for. His master, a brown, handsome, big young shepherd from Tweedsmuir, would have liked to have knocked down any man, would "drink up Esil, or eat a crocodile," for that part, if he had a chance: it was no use kicking the little dog; that would only make him hold the closer. Many were the means shouted out in mouthfuls, of the best possible ways of ending it. "Water!" but there was none near, and many cried for it who might have got it from the well at Blackfriars Wynd. "Bite the tail!" and a large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged man, more desirous than wise, with some struggle got the bushy end of Yarrow's tail into his ample mouth, and bit it with all his might. This was more than enough for the much-enduring, much-perspiring shepherd, who, with a gleam of joy over his broad visage, delivered a terrific facer upon our large, vague, benevolent, middle-aged friend,—who went down like a shot.

Still the Chicken holds; death not far off. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" observed a calm, highly-dressed young buck, with an eyeglass in his eye. "Snuff, indeed!" growled the angry crowd, affronted and glaring. "Snuff! a pinch of snuff!" again observes the buck, but with more urgency; whereon were produced several open boxes, and from a mull which may have been at Culloden, he took a pinch, knelt down, and presented it to the nose of the Chicken. The laws of physiology and of snuff take their course; the Chicken sneezes, and Yarrow is free!

The young pastoral giant stalks off with Yarrow in his arms,—comforting him.

But the Bull Terrier's blood is up, and his soul unsatisfied; he grips the first dog he meets, and discovering she is not a dog, in Homeric phrase, he makes a brief sort of *amende*, and is off. The boys, with Bob and me at their head, are after him: down Niddry Street he goes, bent on mischief; up the Cowgate like an arrow—Bob and I, and our small men, panting behind.

There, under the single arch of the South Bridge, is a huge mastiff, sauntering down the middle of the causeway, as if with his hands in his pockets: he is old, grey, brindled, as big as a little Highland bull, and has the Shaksperian dewlaps shaking as he goes.

The Chicken makes straight at him, and fastens on his throat. To our astonishment, the great creature does nothing but stand still, hold himself up, and roar—yes, roar ; a long, serious, remonstrative roar. How is this ? Bob and I are up to them. *He is muzzled !* The bailies had proclaimed a general muzzling, and his master, studying strength and economy mainly, had encompassed his huge jaws in a home-made apparatus, constructed out of the leather of some ancient breechin'. His mouth was open as far as it could ; his lips curled up in rage—a sort of terrible grin ; his teeth gleaming, ready, from out the darkness ; the strap across his mouth tense as a bow-string ; his whole frame stiff with indignation and surprise ; his roar asking us all round, “ Did you ever see the like of this ? ” He looked a statue of anger and astonishment, done in Aberdeen granite.

We soon had a crowd : the Chicken held on. “ A knife ! ” cried Bob ; and a cobbler gave him his knife : you know the kind of knife, worn away obliquely to a point, and always keen. I put its edge to the tense leather ; it ran before it ; and then !—one sudden jerk of that enormous head, a sort of dirty mist about his mouth, no noise,—and the bright and fierce little fellow is dropped, limp, and dead. A solemn pause ; this was more than any of us had bargained for. I turned the little fellow over, and saw he was quite dead : the mastiff had taken him by the small of the back like a rat, and broken it.

He looked down at his victim appeased, ashamed, and amazed ; snuffed him all over, stared at him, and taking a sudden thought, turned round and trotted off. Bob took the dead dog up, and said, “ John, we'll bury him after tea.” “ Yes,” said I, and was off after the mastiff. He made up the Cowgate at a rapid swing ; he had forgotten some engagement. He turned up the Candlemaker Row, and stopped at the Harrow Inn.

There was a carrier's cart ready to start, and a keen, thin, impatient, black-a-vised little man, his hand at his grey horse's head, looking about angrily for something. “ Rab, ye thief ! ” said he, aiming a kick at my great friend, who drew cringing up, and avoiding the heavy shoe with more agility than dignity, and watching his master's eye, slunk dismayed under the cart,—his eyes down, and as much as he had of tail down too.

What a man this must be—thought I—to whom my tremendous hero turns tail ! The carrier saw the muzzle hanging, cut and useless, from his neck, and I eagerly told him the story, which Bob and I

always thought and still think, Homer, or King David, or Sir Walter, alone were worthy to rehearse. The severe little man was mitigated, and condescended to say, "Rab, ma man, puir Rabbie,"—whereupon the stump of a tail rose up, the ears were cocked, the eyes filled, and were comforted; the two friends were reconciled. "Hupp!" and a stroke of the whip was given to Jess; and off went the three.

Bob and I buried the Game Chicken that night (we had not much of a tea) in the back-green of his house, in Melville Street, No. 17, with considerable gravity and silence; and being at the time in the *Iliad*, and, like all boys, Trojans, we called him Hector of course.

Six years have passed—a long time, for a boy and a dog: Bob Ainslie is off to the wars; I am a medical student, and clerk at Minto House Hospital.

Rab I saw almost every week, on the Wednesday; and we had much pleasant intimacy. I found the way to his heart by frequent scratching of his huge head, and an occasional bone. When I did not notice him he would plant himself straight before me, and stand wagging that bud of a tail, and looking up, with his head a little to the one side. His master I occasionally saw; he used to call me "Maister John," but was laconic as any Spartan.

One fine October afternoon, I was leaving the hospital, when I saw the large gate open, and in walked Rab, with that great and easy saunter of his. He looked as if taking general possession of the place; like the Duke of Wellington entering a subdued city, satiated with victory and peace. After him came Jess, now white from age, with her cart; and in it a woman, carefully wrapped up,—the carrier leading the horse anxiously, and looking back. When he saw me, James (for his name was James Noble) made a curt and grotesque "boo," and said, "Maister John, this is the mistress; she's got a trouble in her breest—some kind o' an income we're thinkin'."

By this time I saw the woman's face; she was sitting on a sack filled with straw, her husband's plaid round her, and his big coat, with its large white metal buttons, over her feet.

I never saw a more unforgettable face—pale, serious, *lonely*,¹

¹ It is not easy giving this look by one word; it was expressive of her being so much of her life alone.

delicate, sweet, without being at all what we call fine. She looked sixty, and had on a mutch, white as snow, with its black ribbon ; her silvery, smooth hair setting off her dark grey eyes—eyes such as one sees only twice or thrice in a lifetime, full of suffering, full also of the overcoming of it : her eyebrows black and delicate, and her mouth firm, patient, and contented, which few mouths ever are.

As I have said, I never saw a more beautiful countenance, or one more subdued to settled quiet. “ Ailie,” said James, “ this is Maister John, the young doctor ; Rab’s freend, ye ken. We often speak aboot you, doctor.” She smiled, and made a movement, but said nothing ; and prepared to come down, putting her plaid aside and rising. Had Solomon, in all his glory, been handing down the Queen of Sheba at his palace gate, he could not have done it more daintily, more tenderly, more like a gentleman, than did James the Howgate carrier, when he lifted down Ailie his wife. The contrast of his small, swarthy, weather-beaten, keen, worldly face to hers—pale, subdued, and beautiful—was something wonderful. Rab looked on concerned and puzzled, but ready for anything that might turn up,—were it to strangle the nurse, the porter, or even me. Ailie and he seemed great friends.

“ As I was sayin’, she’s got a kind o’ trouble in her breest, doctor ; wull ye tak’ a look at it ? ” We walked into the consulting-room, all four ; Rab grim and comic, willing to be happy and confidential if cause could be shown, willing also to be the reverse, on the same terms. Ailie sat down, undid her open gown and her lawn handkerchief round her neck, and, without a word, showed me her right breast. I looked at and examined it carefully,—she and James watching me, and Rab eyeing all three. What could I say ? there it was, that had once been so soft, so shapely, so white, so gracious and bountiful, so “ full of all blessed conditions,” hard as a stone, a centre of horrid pain, making that pale face, with its grey, lucid, reasonable eyes, and its sweet resolved mouth, express the full measure of suffering overcome. Why was that gentle, modest, sweet woman, clean and loveable, condemned by God to bear such a burden ?

I got her away to bed. “ May Rab and me bide ? ” said James. “ You may ; and Rab, if he will behave himself.” “ I’se warrant he’s do that, doctor ” ; and in slunk the faithful beast. I wish you could have seen him. There are no such dogs now. He belonged to a lost tribe. As I have said, he was brindled, and grey like Rubislaw granite : his hair short, hard, and close, like a lion’s ; his body thick

set, like a little bull—a sort of compressed Hercules of a dog. He must have been ninety pounds weight, at the least ; he had a large blunt head ; his muzzle black as night, his mouth blacker than any night, a tooth or two—being all he had—gleaming out of his jaws of darkness. His head was scarred with the records of old wounds, a sort of series of fields of battle all over it ; one eye out, one ear cropped as close as was Archbishop Leighton's father's ; the remaining eye had the power of two ; and above it, and in constant communication with it, was a tattered rag of an ear, which was for ever unfurling itself, like an old flag ; and then that bud of a tail, about one inch long, if it could in any sense be said to be long, being as broad as long—the mobility, the instantaneousness of that bud were very funny and surprising, and its expressive twinklings and winkings, the intercommunications between the eye, the ear and it, were of the oddest and swiftest.

Rab had the dignity and simplicity of great size ; and having fought his way all along the road to absolute supremacy, he was as mighty in his own line as Julius Caesar or the Duke of Wellington, and had the gravity of all great fighters.

You must have often observed the likeness of certain men to certain animals, and of certain dogs to men. Now, I never looked at Rab without thinking of the great Baptist preacher, Andrew Fuller. The same large, heavy, menacing, combative, sombre, honest countenance, the same deep inevitable eye, the same look,—as of thunder asleep, but ready,—neither a dog nor a man to be trifled with.

Next day, my master, the surgeon, examined Ailie. There was no doubt it must kill her, and soon. It could be removed—it might never return—it would give her speedy relief—she should have it done. She curtsied, looked at James, and said, “ When ? ” “ To-morrow,” said the kind surgeon—a man of few words. She and James and Rab and I retired. I noticed that he and she spoke little, but seemed to anticipate everything in each other. The following day, at noon, the students came in, hurrying up the great stair. At the first landing-place, on a small well-known blackboard, was a bit of paper fastened by wafers, and many remains of old wafers beside it. On the paper were the words,—“ An operation to-day. J. B., *Clerk.*”

Up ran the youths, eager to secure good places : in they crowded, full of interest and talk. “ What's the case ? ” “ Which side is it ? ”

Don't think them heartless ; they are neither better nor worse than you or I : they get over their professional horrors, and into their

proper work ; and in them pity—as an *emotion*, ending in itself or at best in tears and a long-drawn breath, lessens, while pity as a *motive*, is quickened and gains power and purpose. It is well for poor human nature that it is so.

The operating theatre is crowded ; much talk and fun, and all the cordiality and stir of youth. The surgeon with his staff of assistants is there. In comes Ailie : one look at her quiets and abates the eager students. That beautiful old woman is too much for them ; they sit down, and are dumb, and gaze at her. These rough boys feel the power of her presence. She walks in quickly, but without haste ; dressed in her mutch, her neckerchief, her white dimity shortgown, her black bombazeen petticoat, showing her white worsted stockings and her carpet-shoes. Behind her was James with Rab. James sat down in the distance, and took that huge and noble head between his knees. Rab looked perplexed and dangerous ; for ever cocking his ear and dropping it as fast.

Ailie stepped up on a seat, and laid herself on the table, as her friend the surgeon told her ; arranged herself, gave a rapid look at James, shut her eyes, rested herself on me, and took my hand. The operation was at once begun ; it was necessarily slow ; and chloroform—one of God's best gifts to His suffering children—was then unknown. The surgeon did his work. The pale face showed its pain, but was still and silent. Rab's soul was working within him ; he saw that something strange was going on,—blood flowing from his mistress, and she suffering ; his ragged ear was up, and importunate ; he growled and gave now and then a sharp impatient yelp ; he would have liked to have done something to that man. But James had him firm, and gave him a *glower* from time to time ; and an intimation of a possible kick ;—all the better for James, it kept his eye and his mind off Ailie.

It is over : she is dressed, steps gently and decently down from the table, looks for James ; then, turning to the surgeon and the students, she curtsies,—and in a low, clear voice, begs their pardon if she has behaved ill. The students—all of us—wept like children ; the surgeon happed her up carefully,—and, resting on James and me, Ailie went to her room, Rab following. We put her to bed. James took off his heavy shoes, crammed with tackets, heel-capt and toe-capt, and put them carefully under the table, saying, “ Maister John, I'm for nane o' yer stryng nurse bodies for Ailie. I'll be her nurse,

and I'll gang aboot on my stockin' soles as canny as pussy." And so he did ; and handy and clever, and swift and tender as any woman, was that horny-handed, snell, peremptory little man. Everything she got he gave her : he seldom slept, and often I saw his small shrewd eyes out of the darkness, fixed on her. As before, they spoke little.

Rab behaved well, never moving, showing us how meek and gentle he could be, and occasionally, in his sleep, letting us know that he was demolishing some adversary. He took a walk with me every day, generally to the Candlemaker Row ; but he was sombre and mild ; declined doing battle, though some fit cases offered, and indeed submitted to sundry indignities ; and was always very ready to turn, and came faster back, and trotted up the stair with much lightness, and went straight to that door.

Jess, the mare, had been sent, with her weather-worn cart, to Howgate, and had doubtless her own dim and placid meditations and confusions, on the absence of her master and Rab, and her unnatural freedom from the road and her cart.

For some days Ailie did well. The wound healed " by the first intention " ; for as James said, " Oor Ailie's skin's ower clean to beil." The students came in quiet and anxious, and surrounded her bed. She said she liked to see their young, honest faces. The surgeon dressed her, and spoke to her in his own short kind way, pitying her through his eyes, Rab and James outside the circle,—Rab being now reconciled, and even cordial, and having made up his mind that as yet nobody required worrying, but, as you may suppose, *semper paratus*.

So far well : but, four days after the operation, my patient had a sudden and long shivering, a " groosin'," as she called it. I saw her soon after ; her eyes were too bright, her cheek coloured : she was restless, and ashamed of being so ; the balance was lost ; mischief had begun. On looking at the wound, a blush of red told the secret : her pulse was rapid, her breathing anxious and quick, she wasn't herself, as she said, and was vexed at her restlessness. We tried what we could. James did everything, was everything ; never in the way, never out of it ; Rab subsided under the table into a dark place, and was motionless, all but his eye, which followed every one. Ailie got worse ; began to wander in her mind, gently ; was more demonstrative in her ways to James, rapid in her questions, and sharp at times. He was vexed, and said, " She was never that way afore ; no, never." For a time she knew her head was wrong, and was always asking our

pardon—the dear, gentle old woman : then delirium set in strong, without pause. Her brain gave way, and then came that terrible spectacle—

The intellectual power, through words and things,
Went sounding on its dim and perilous way ;

she sang bits of old songs and Psalms, stopping suddenly, mingling the Psalms of David, and the diviner words of his Son and Lord, with homely odds and ends and scraps of ballads.

Nothing more touching, or in a sense more strangely beautiful, did I ever witness. Her tremulous, rapid, affectionate, eager Scotch voice,—the swift, aimless, bewildered mind, the baffled utterance, the bright and perilous eye ; some wild words, some household cares, something for James, the names of the dead, Rab called rapidly and in a “fremyt” voice, and he starting up, surprised, and slinking off as if he were to blame somehow, or had been dreaming he heard. Many eager questions and beseechings which James and I could make nothing of, and on which she seemed to set her all, and then sink back ununderstood. It was very sad, but better than many things that are not called sad. James hovered about, put out and miserable, but active and exact as ever ; read to her, when there was a lull, short bits from the Psalms, prose and metre, chanting the latter in his own rude and serious way, showing great knowledge of the fit words, bearing up like a man, and doating over her as his “ain Ailie.” “Ailie, ma woman !” “Ma ain bonnie wee dawtie !”

The end was drawing on : the golden bowl was breaking ; the silver cord was fast being loosed—that *animula blandula, vagula, hospes, comesque*, was about to flee. The body and soul—companions for sixty years—were being sundered, and taking leave. She was walking, alone, through the valley of that shadow, into which one day we must all enter,—and yet she was not alone, for we know whose rod and staff were comforting her.

One night she had fallen quiet, and as we hoped, asleep ; her eyes were shut. We put down the gas, and sat watching her. Suddenly she sat up in bed, and taking a bed-gown which was lying on it rolled up, she held it eagerly to her breast,—to the right side. We could see her eyes bright with a surprising tenderness and joy, bending over this bundle of clothes. She held it as a woman holds her sucking child ; opening out her nightgown impatiently, and holding it close, and brooding over it, and murmuring foolish little words, as over one

whom his mother comforteth, and who sucks and is satisfied. It was pitiful and strange to see her wasted dying look, keen and yet vague—her immense love.

"Preserve me!" groaned James, giving way. And then she rocked back and forward, as if to make it sleep, hushing it, and wasting on it her infinite fondness. "Wae's me, doctor; I declare she's thinkin' it's that bairn." "What bairn?" "The only bairn we ever had; our wee Mysie, and she's in the Kingdom, forty years and mair." It was plainly true: the pain in the breast, telling its urgent story to a bewildered, ruined brain, was misread and mistaken; it suggested to her the uneasiness of a breast full of milk, and then the child; and so again once more they were together, and she had her ain wee Mysie in her bosom.

This was the close. She sank rapidly: the delirium left her; but, as she whispered, she was "clean silly"; it was the lightening before the final darkness. After having for some time lain still—her eyes shut, she said "James!" He came close to her, and lifting up her calm, clear, beautiful eyes, she gave him a long look, turned to me kindly but shortly, looked for Rab but could not see him, then turned to her husband again, as if she would never leave off looking, shut her eyes, and composed herself. She lay for some time breathing quick, and passed away so gently, that when we thought she was gone, James, in his old-fashioned way, held the mirror to her face. After a long pause, one small spot of dimness was breathed out; it vanished away, and never returned, leaving the blank clear darkness of the mirror without a stain. "What is our life? it is even a vapour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Rab all this time had been full awake and motionless: he came forward beside us; Ailie's hand, which James had held, was hanging down; it was soaked with his tears; Rab licked it all over carefully, looked at her, and returned to his place under the table.

James and I sat, I don't know how long, but for some time,—saying nothing: he started up abruptly, and with some noise went to the table, and putting his right fore and middle fingers each into a shoe, pulled them out, and put them on, breaking one of the leather latches, and muttering in anger, "I never did the like o' that afore!"

I believe he never did; nor after either. "Rab!" he said roughly, and pointing with his thumb to the bottom of the bed. Rab leapt up, and settled himself; his head and eye to the dead face. "Maister John, ye'll wait for me," said the carrier; and disappeared in the

darkness, thundering downstairs in his heavy shoes. I ran to a front window : there he was, already round the house, and out at the gate, fleeing like a shadow.

I was afraid about him, and yet not afraid ; so I sat down beside Rab, and being wearied, fell asleep. I awoke from a sudden noise outside. It was November, and there had been a heavy fall of snow. Rab was *in statu quo* ; he heard the noise too, and plainly knew it, but never moved. I looked out ; and there, at the gate, in the dim morning—for the sun was not up, was Jess and the cart,—a cloud of steam rising from the old mare. I did not see James ; he was already at the door, and came up the stairs, and met me. It was less than three hours since he left, and he must have posted out—who knows how ?—to Howgate, full nine miles off ; yoked Jess, and driven her astonished into town. He had an armful of blankets, and was streaming with perspiration. He nodded to me, spread out on the floor two pairs of clean old blankets having at their corners, “ A. G., 1796,” in large letters in red worsted. These were the initials of Alison Graeme, and James may have looked in at her from without—himself unseen but not unthought of—when he was “ wat, wat, and weary,” and after having walked many a mile over the hills, may have seen her sitting, while “ a’ the lave were sleepin’ ” ; and by the firelight working her name on the blankets, for her ain James’s bed.

He motioned Rab down, and taking his wife in his arms, laid her in the blankets, and happed her carefully and firmly up, leaving the face uncovered ; and then lifting her, he nodded again sharply to me, and with a resolved but utterly miserable face, strode along the passage, and downstairs, followed by Rab. I followed with a light ; but he didn’t need it. I went out, holding stupidly the candle in my hand in the calm frosty air ; we were soon at the gate. I could have helped him, but I saw he was not to be meddled with, and he was strong, and did not need it. He laid her down as tenderly, as safely, as he had lifted her out ten days before—as tenderly as when he had her first in his arms when she was only “ A. G.,”—sorted her, leaving that beautiful sealed face open to the heavens ; and then taking Jess by the head, he moved away. He did not notice me, neither did Rab, who presided behind the cart.

I stood till they passed through the long shadow of the College, and turned up Nicolson Street. I heard the solitary cart sound through the streets and die away and come again ; and I returned, thinking of that company going up Liberton Brae, then along Roslin

Muir, the morning light touching the Pentlands and making them like on-looking ghosts ; then down the hill through Auchindinny woods, past " haunted Woodhouselee " ; and as daybreak came sweeping up the bleak Lammermuirs, and fell on his own door, the company would stop, and James would take the key and lift Ailie up again, laying her on her own bed, and, having put Jess up, would return with Rab and shut the door.

James buried his wife, with his neighbours mourning, Rab inspecting the solemnity from a distance. It was snow, and that black ragged hole would look strange in the midst of the swelling spotless cushion of white. James looked after everything ; then rather suddenly fell ill and took to bed ; was insensible when the doctor came, and soon died. A sort of low fever was prevailing in the village, and his want of sleep, his exhaustion, and his misery, made him apt to take it. The grave was not difficult to reopen. A fresh fall of snow had again made all things white and smooth ; Rab once more looked on, and slunk home to the stable.

And what of Rab ? I asked for him next week at the new carrier who got the goodwill of James's business, and was now master of Jess and her cart. " How's Rab ? " He put me off, and said rather rudely, " What's *your* business wi' the dowg ? " I was not to be so put off. " Where's Rab ? " He, getting confused and red, and intermeddling with his hair, said, " 'Deed, sir, Rab's deid." " Dead ! what did he die off ? " " Weel, sir," said he, getting redder, " he didna exactly dee ; he was killed. I had to brain him wi' a rack-pin ; there was nae doin' wi' him. He lay in the treviss wi' the mear, and wadna come oot. I temptit him wi' kail and meat, but he wad tak naething, and keepit me frae feedin' the beast, and he was aye gur gurrin', and grup gruppin' me by the legs. I was laith to make awa wi' the auld dowg, his like wasna atween this and Thornhill,—but, 'deed, sir, I could dae naething else." I believed him. Fit end for Rab, quick and complete. His teeth and his friends gone, why should he keep the peace and be civil ?

He was buried in the braeface, near the burn, the children of the village, his companions, who used to make very free with him and sit on his ample stomach, as he lay half asleep at the door in the sun—watching the solemnity.

WALTER LOGAN

circa 1810

THE DOUBLE-BEDDED ROOM

"**T**HE morn was fair, the sky was clear," when Mr. Andrew Micklewhame set his foot aboard one of the "Stirling, Alloa, and Kincardine Steam Company's" boats, at the Chain Pier, Newhaven, for the purpose of proceeding to the first-named place, on a visit to his old friend, David Kerr, who had been, for upwards of twenty years, a respectable ironmonger in that romantic town.

On reaching Alloa, however, where, as every one knows, the steamers pause for such length of time as enables them to take in a supply of coals, and the tide to run up, it began to rain, in the manner best expressed by the household phrase, "auld wives and pipe stapples." Notwithstanding this, Andrew being determined to make the most of his time—for a week was the utmost limit of his leave of absence from the Edinburgh cloth establishment in which he was in the habit of wearing away his days and his coat sleeves—ascended from the cabin where he had been luxuriating over the only volume—the first of *Wilson's Tales of the Borders*—of which its library could boast; and unfurling his umbrella, walked ashore in the fond hope of seeing or hearing something worth the seeing or hearing.

And Andrew was not disappointed; for, to his unspeakable delight, he descried against the gable-end of a white house, a play-bill, on which *Venice Preserved* appeared in letters of half-an-inch deep; the part of Pierre, by Mr. Ferdinand Gustavus Trash, and Jaffier, by Mr. Henry Watkins. The afterpiece, *Rob Roy*.

Being extremely partial to theatrical amusements, of whatever description, and, moreover, being a contributor to a dramatic review, published weekly in the Scottish metropolis, it occurred to Mr. Andrew Micklewhame that here he might, in all probability, find materials sufficient on which to establish a funny critique, that would print to the extent of at least six of the twelve pages of the aforesaid dramatic review, and yield him good pay. Such an opportunity was not to be lost. He, therefore, resolved on remaining at Alloa that night to

witness the performances, and proceeding to Stirling next morning by the earliest conveyance.

Having arranged this to his own content, he stalked majestically into an inn without stopping to notice the sign which projected angularly over the door, bearing the representation of a ship in full sail, among emerald waves, with moon-rakers and sky-scrapers ingeniously mixed up with the indigo clouds above—and stoutly called for a pint of porter and a biscuit, to take the edge off his appetite.

This inn rejoiced not in a landlord ; he that *was* the landlord had, some twelve years before, taken himself off to “ that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns ” ; and his widow had not been lucky enough to meet with another ready and willing to let himself become entangled with her in the meshes of matrimony. The waiters who had, in her husband’s time, been wont to serve the customers, had either died out, or gone to other and better situations, and left her with one solitary maid of all work—the same who had officiated as barmaid to the inn for fifteen years.

This maid of all work—Kirsty by name—was a tall, hard-featured woman, of—by her own acknowledgment—two-and-forty ; not very tidy in her adornment, nor very bewitching in her manner. She it was who brought Mr. Andrew Micklewhame the pint of porter and the biscuit.

“ I suppose, my dear ! ” said Andrew—(he had been a gay deceiver in his youth, and ever since that period the phrase, “ my dear ! ” had stuck to him, and always when speaking to a female did he use it)—“ I suppose, my dear,” continued he, “ I can have tea, and a beef-steak, or something of that kind, to it, in ”—(here he stopped, and looked at his watch, from which he ascertained that it was then half-past four o’clock)—“ in an hour and a half ; and as I purpose staying here to-night, I should like a bed. Will you arrange this for me ? ”

“ Ye can easily get your tea, sir,” said the woman of forty-two, looking pleased at being addressed “ my dear ” ; “ but as for the bed, unless ye like to sleep in a double-bedded room, we canna gie ye accommodation. The lad that sleeps in ane o’ the beds is a detent sort o’ a callant. We dinna ken much aboot him, though ; for he only comes here at nicht for his bed ; and in the mornings, after his breakfast, awa’ he gangs, and we never see his face till nicht again ; except upon the Sundays, when he aye has a pairty o’ braw leddies an’ gentlemen to dinner wi’ him. He has leaved that way for a fortnicht or

three weeks ; an' my mistress hasna been the woman to ask him for a penny. Fegs ! I'm thinkin' she has taen a notion o' the callant. What he is or what he diz we dinna ken, an' naebody can tell us."

" Mysterious being ! " inwardly ejaculated (as the novelists' phrase goes) Mr. Micklewhame ; then turning to Kirsty, with an inquiring look, he said, " Is he genteel in appearance ? of good address ? of pleasing manner ? Is he—— "

" Ou, ay ! " was the reply ; " he's a' that. I never seed a genteeler young man in a' my days ; and sae handsome too ; sic black whiskers, an' sae broad aboot the shuthers. My certie, he's a stalworth chiel. An' as for his address, heth, man, he often gies me a kiss in the mornings as he gangs oot, and promises me anither whan he comes back again. Ye needna be the least feared to sleep in the same room wi' him."

" Feared ! " muttered Micklewhame. " Afraid of a man with black whiskers and broad shoulders ! I flatter myself I never was afraid in my life." So saying, he elevated himself on his pins to the same degree as he rose at that moment in his own estimation. Then turning to the table whereon he had deposited his hat, he seized it up, and, with a dexterous jerk, stuck it on his head, at the same time exclaiming, " Ye may prepare the bed for me ; I'll sleep in the room with this mysterious man ; and, while the tea is getting ready, I'll just take a short stroll."

With these words he left the inn.

Mr. Andrew Micklewhame was a middle-aged man, with a rotundity of corpus, and a bachelor to boot. In his youthful days his love for the fair sex had partaken more of a general than a particular character ; and now that he had arrived at the meridian of life, his taste had grown too particular for him to choose a partner for the remainder of his days from those unmarried ladies whom he ranked among his acquaintances. " Girls," he would say, " are not half so pretty, nor half so domestic, as they were in my young days."

Once, indeed, at a party to which he had been accidentally invited, he had felt a kind of a sort of a nervous tremulousness come over him on being set down at the supper table beside a lady who, he discovered, was a widow ; not from her garb, however ; for widows—that is, young widows free of encumbrance—usually dress themselves in a much gayer manner than they were wont to do when " nice young maidens." He had made himself as agreeable as it was in his power

to do, drinking wine with her at least half-a-dozen times, and otherwise doing, as he supposed, "the polite."

Nay, he even went so far as to volunteer his services in seeing her home; and on the way over (she was from the country, and, *pro tempore*, resided with a friend in Bruntsfield Place, fronting the Links) he had the boldness to pop the question. He was accepted, and invited to breakfast with the lady the following morning. The morning came; but Andrew did not go—the fumes of the wine having subsided, and "Richard being himself again." He had taken a second thought on the subject, and determined on remaining a bachelor; by which arrangement the widow Brown was, like Lord Ullin for his daughter, "left lamenting." Who her husband had been? whether she had money? what was her situation in life? were what Andrew tried long and earnestly to discover, but in vain—the widow Brown seemed wrapped in mystery; and, from that hour, when he imprinted a kiss upon her lips, under a lamp-post, at two o'clock in the morning, in Bruntsfield Place, he had neither seen nor heard of her.

Years—six in number—had elapsed since then, and Andrew had not ventured to accept another invitation to an evening party; but, as soon as his business for the day was over, he returned to his solitary lodging in Richmond Street; and, for the remainder of the evening, followed the example of the gentlemen of England, and "lived at home at ease," never stirring out, except to pay an occasional visit to the theatre.

The localities of Alloa were quite unknown to Andrew, for the best reason in the world—he had never been in it before; but, by dint of attending to the usual expedient resorted to on like occasions—that of following his nose, in the space of a few minutes he discovered that his feet, or fate, had led him into a dockyard, where a vessel was just upon the point of being wedded to the ocean.

Some women and men—the former, as usual, predominant—were seated on logs beneath a shed; others, the more impatient, seemingly, were walking about with umbrellas and parasols above their heads—young men with young misses, old men and babes. Children in their first childhood, of various shapes and sizes, chiefly bare-footed, were scampering among the wet sawdust, round about the logs of wood, in the shed and out of it, quite absorbed in the spirit-stirring game of "tig"—ever and anon yelping out each other's names, and otherwise expressing their joy at not being "it."

Among their seniors there was a great deal of gabble to very little purpose, with a preponderate share of bustle and agitation.

Carpenters were thumping away at the blocks on which the vessel rested, making more noise than progress. At length the blocks were fairly driven out, and away boomed the vessel into the Forth, amid the cheers of the assembled spectators. The general interest then subsided; and in a few minutes thereafter, with exception of the carpenters and some stray children, the dockyard presented the picture of emptiness. The din had ended; and the multitude, reversing the condition of Rob Roy, had left desolation where they had found plenty.

Tea over, Mr. Andrew Micklewhame, having first seen to his accommodation for the night, and secured a place in the Stirling omnibus, which was advertised to start the next morning precisely at nine, wended his way quietly to the theatre.

It was in the Assembly Room—a rumbling old mansion, on the windows of which “Time’s effacing fingers” had taken *pains* to leave their marks so effectually, that sundry detachments of old soot-bedizened “clouts” filled up those interstices where glass had once been. “The nonpareil company of comedians” entertained their audiences and held their orgies on the second floor—the first being occupied as an academy, where “young gentlemen are taken in and done for.” The scenes in which the establishment rejoiced were five in number.

Luckily, *Venice Preserved* did not require so many; but in *Rob Roy* the manager was compelled to make them perform double duty; and, consequently, the same scene was thrust on for the inside of a village inn, apartment in Bailie Nicol Jarvie’s, and the interior of Jean M’Alpine’s change-house. The audience department was most gorgeous: there were boxes, pit, and gallery; or, in other words, front, middle, and back seats—the term “boxes” being applied to the front form, to which there was a back attached, most aristocratically garnished with green cloth, with brass nails in relief. At the farther end of this form “an efficient orchestra” was placed.

It consisted of a boy to play the pan-pipes and the triangles at one and the same moment, a lad to thump away at the brass drum, and a blind man to perform on the clarionet—the last being dignified in the bills by the title of “leader of the orchestra, and conductor of music.” The whole under the immediate superintendence of Mr. Ferdinand Gustavus Trash.

After an immensity of preliminary puffs into the clarionet, occasional rattles on the drum, and consultations among themselves as to the air to be played, the musicians struck up the spirit-stirring "All Round my Hat"; which, though achieved in beautiful disregard of time and concord, was received with great—ay, with very great applause, by the momentarily increasing audience, some of whom mistook it for "God save the King," and, in an extreme fit of loyalty, bawled out—"Off hats! stand up!" with which command many did not hesitate to comply.

There was a pause, interrupted at length by the loudly expressed wish of the gods that the curtain should draw up. Up it went accordingly, and *Venice Preserved* commenced with some show of enthusiasm. Belvidera was personated by an interesting female of five-and-thirty, who, after parting in tears from Jaffier, a youth of eighteen, as the means of acquainting the audience with her extraordinary vocal abilities, consoled herself and them with that very appropriate ditty—"Within a mile of Edinburgh Town," accompanied by the orchestra. The Doge of Venice, not to be outdone, as it were, left his throne after the terrific disclosures of Jaffier, and, in honest exultation at the discovery of the horrid plot, solaced the mysterious Council of Ten with—"I was the Boy for bewitching them." The brass drum was particularly distinguished in the accompaniment.

In a critique of the performances which Mr. Micklewhame wrote, he says: "It would have greatly added to the delight of those conversant with the pure English idiom had many of the actors paid a visit, for a short time, to the *first* floor of the Assembly Room, ere venturing to appear on the second."

The meagreness of the company compelled several of the principal performers to play inferior parts, in addition to those against which their names appeared in the bill. For instance, in *Rob Roy*, the same person who performed Rashleigh had to "go on" in the capacity of a peasant, and sing a bass solo in the opening glee. Owen and Major Galbraith were *done* by the same individual. Mattie sang in the opening glee, and danced the Highland Fling, at the Pass of Lochard, with Dougal and Bailie Nicol Jarvie. Some of the audience were scandalised at the appearance of Mattie on this occasion, and began to entertain great doubts of the morality of the Bailie, when they saw his handmaid in his company so far from the Trongate.

Seated on *the* front form, with green cloth back studded with brass

nails, and immediately behind a row of six penny dipped candles, tastefully arranged in order among an equivalent number of holes in a stick placed in front of the drop-scene, to divide the audience from the actors, Andrew Micklewhame gazed on all this with the stoical indifference of one who is used to such things : in short, he gazed on it with the eye of an experienced critic—the best of all possible ways to mar one's enjoyment of a play.

Occasionally, however, he felt inclined to indulge in a hearty laugh ; but the dignity of the critic came to his aid, and he restrained it by turning away his face from the stage, and casting his scrutinising glance around the inhabitants of the seats in the rear, or listened to the remarks of those in the pit. It was during the latter part of the performance of the first act, and the interval between it and the second, that he, in this manner, overheard the fragments of a conversation carried on, *sotto voce*, in the seat immediately behind him.

He had the curiosity to steal a glance at the speakers. They were a young woman, with fine dark eyes, and a young man of apparently five-and-twenty years of age, with cheeks *redolent* of rouge, enveloped in a faded Petersham greatcoat, whom Andrew immediately set down as belonging to the company of comedians. He could hear the young woman with the dark eyes upbraiding the young man with the coloured cheeks for deserting her ; then the young man said he had intended to write her soon, with some money, so she ought not to have followed him.

" I am pretty well situated in lodgings here at present," continued the young man ; " but I cannot venture to take you there to-night, for the fact of my being a married man would not, were it known, raise me in the estimation of the landlady. But I will procure other lodgings for you after the play is over ; and if you do not hear from me in the morning at farthest by ten, you may call for me at the inn where I am staying."

He ended by observing that he was wanted in the next act to go on as a Highlander ; and, accordingly, he left her, and crept in behind the curtain.

There was nothing very extraordinary in all this ; yet, though Andrew knew that such occurrences happened daily, he could not help thinking of what he had just overheard, and feeling interested in the damsel of the sparkling eyes. He did not dare, however, to take another peep at her, as he thought it would be too marked ; and when he rose, at the termination of the performances, to go away, the seat behind

him was quite vacant ; nor could he discern, among the dense mass of human beings that obstructed the doorway, the slightest vestige of her, or the youth in the shabby greatcoat, who had acknowledged himself her husband.

The rain had not ceased when Mr. Micklewhame left the Assembly Room, so he hurried to his inn with all possible despatch. Mr. Micklewhame prided himself on his knowledge of the principles of economy ; and when he travelled, he invariably made it a point to take no more than two meals per diem—breakfast and tea—both with a meat accompaniment ; but this evening—this particular evening—as he sat toasting his toes before an excellent fire, in a comfortable parlour of a comfortable inn, and heard the rain pattering against the casement, it somehow or other entered into his head that a tumbler of punch would be by no means amiss.

A tumbler of punch was ordered in accordingly ; after that came a second, and a third ; and—no, we can't exactly say that there was a fourth. At all events, there was a marked inclination first towards one side of the staircase, and then towards the other, in Mr. Andrew Micklewhame's ascent to his bedroom that evening. Nay, more : he attempted to kiss Kirsty as she was depositing the candlestick upon the table ; but he missed his aim, and measured his length on the floor. By the time he was up again, Kirsty had vanished.

Mr. Micklewhame was a little annoyed that he could not use the precaution of bolting his door. The mysterious man, with the black whiskers and broad shoulders, had not yet claimed his bed, although it was pretty well on towards

The wee short hour ayont the twal'.

" I don't half like this sleeping in a double-bedded room, with a man I never saw," he thought, but did not venture to say it aloud, lest some one might be within ear-shot, and set him down as a coward. " I wonder," exclaimed he, as he proceeded to undress before the yet glowing embers of a consumptive fire, " whether—hic—whether the f—f—fellow snores ? I shan't sleep, I'm sure—hic—I shan't—hic—sleep if the f—f—fellow snores."

Having delivered himself of this very sensible observation, he got into one of the beds in the best way he could, covered himself up warm, and fell fast asleep.

Dreams visited his pillow : distorted visions, in which Kirsty, the

dark-eyed damsel, and the man with the black whiskers, bore prominent parts, flitted across his fancy. Then he felt himself borne through the air by a vulture in a shabby brown greatcoat, which set him down on the top of a high house, and flew away. He thought he got up and groped his way along the house-top; but, missing his footing, he fell over, and would certainly have had his brains dashed out upon the pavement below, had not the motion of his descent caused him to start and awaken.

All was still within the chamber. He looked out of bed, but could discover no signs of the appearance of his mysterious neighbour; so he composed himself to sleep again.

This time, however, he was not so successful as at first; for it was only after some time that he could coax himself into a sort of doze—something betwixt sleeping and waking. While in this state he fancied he saw the man in the brown greatcoat enter the room; then he saw a flash of light; then he imagined he smelt sulphur; and then, all of a sudden, he felt himself in reality pulled half out of bed.

“Hollo! hollo!” cried he; “what the deuce is the matter?” and he rubbed his eyes until he found himself wide awake.

“Sir, sir!” cried a voice, “you’ve made a mistake—you’ve got into my bed in place of your own.”

Any one in Andrew’s place but Andrew himself would have cursed and sworn like a trooper at a person daring to awaken him from a comfortable snooze upon such slight pretences; but Andrew was a peaceable man—he never liked to make any disturbance—and he actually, without saying a word, turned out of the bed he had warmed for himself and allowed the stranger to get into his place. He was sure, at all events, that he had not given up his bed to any but the lawful tenant of the room; for a blink of fire-light gleamed upon a pair of extensive whiskers, with shoulders to correspond.

The features struck Andrew as being familiar to him; but he could not, though he tried, for the life of him recollect where he had seen them before. He cursed the fellow’s impudence, as he discovered that the smell of sulphur which had saluted his olfactory nerves was *not* the smell of sulphur, but of a candle having been blown out. He did not dare, though, to utter a word on the subject. He felt very much afraid—indeed, so much so, that it was not till after an hour’s perambulation through the room that he could prevail on himself to lie down in the empty bed. Again he fell fast asleep.

When he awoke, the morning light was streaming into the room through the chinks of the shutters. He wondered very much what o'clock it was, as he remembered that he purposed setting off by the omnibus at nine, and groped about for his watch. Horror! he had left it beneath the pillow of the other bed.

Jumping to the floor with considerable agility, and opening the shutters with a bang, in the hope that noise and daylight would bring him courage, the first objects that met his astonished gaze were a shabby brown greatcoat and a shocking bad hat, lying carelessly on a chair. Had any one asked Andrew to shave his head without soap, or give sixpence for a penny loaf, he could not have been more amazed or terror-stricken than he was at that moment.

That the shabby brown greatcoat and the shocking bad hat belonged to the mysterious man with the black whiskers, and that the mysterious man with the black whiskers and he who had sat beside the damsel with the bright eyes at the play were one and the same individual, Mr. Andrew Micklewhame had not the smallest doubt, and thereupon he began to get a little fidgety regarding his watch. The curtains of the bed were closely drawn—so closely that Andrew could not see in; and he did not just like at first to open the curtains and disturb the whiskered youth in the same manner as the whiskered youth had disturbed him.

He paced the room for some time, fancying all sorts of things about the owner of the shabby brown greatcoat, but never taking his eye off the curtains, resolved to rush forward on the first appearance of their opening.

"'Tis for no good this fellow lives here," thought Andrew. "All a sham, too, his being connected with these players. I have no doubt in my own mind that he is either the murderer of Begbie¹ in disguise, or a resurrectionist. Ah! perhaps he has run away from the world, and come here for the purpose of committing suicide in a quiet way. But, no; why should he? That's quite improbable."

And, after thinking all this, he paused for about five minutes; then said to himself, "I can bear this suspense no longer. Ecod! I'll ask the fellow who he is, and, at the same time, claim my watch!"

So saying, he rushed forward with a determined air, drew the curtains, and discovered—the bed was empty!

¹ Begbie, a bank porter, was murdered in Tweeddale Court, Edinburgh, in 1808, and robbed of £4000 he was conveying to the British Linen Banking Co. from their Leith branch.

"He can't have gone far, for he has left his coat and hat behind him," were Andrew's reflections; and as he said this, he looked for his watch, and then for his clothes.

Amazement! they were all gone: watch, shirt, coat, vest, and inexpressibles—all had vanished. In a paroxysm of fury he rang the bell; and presently the voice of Kirsty, from without, inquired, as she half-opened the door, and thrust forward a pair of well-worn Wellingtons, which Andrew recognised as not belonging to him—"D'ye please to want onything else?"

"Anything else!" roared Andrew, choking with rage, and utterly regardless of the respect due to the sex of the speaker. "Come in here, and help me to find my trowsers!"

"O you—ye'll wait awhile, I'm thinkin', or I do siccan a thing."

"Zounds! that infernal fellow must have carried them off!" muttered Andrew.

"Na, na," said Kirsty; "it's no the infernal gentleman ava, man. I wadna be the least surprised but it's that auld bunchy buddy that sleepit in this room last nicht, and ran awa this morning, wi' the nine o'clock omnibush, without payin' his reckonin', that's taen yer breeks; but ye needna mind, ye can just pit on *his* for a day."

This was too much. To be told that he himself was the thief of his own oh-no-we-never-mention-ems, and that he had run away that morning without paying his reckoning, was more than Andrew Micklewhame could bear.

"Are you mad, woman?" cried he. "Confound you, I'll leave your house instantly, and bring an action for the recovery of my clothes."

"Your claes, quotha—your claes! My man, thae tricks winna do here, I can tell ye. Ye're fund oot at last. My certie, to hear a fallow speakin' o' claes, whan it's weel kenned he had nae mair than a brown greatcoat, an auld hat, an' a pair o' boots I wadna gie tippence for. Ye're fund oot at last. There's twa chaps below has twa or three words to say to ye."

"They may go to the devil, and you along with them!" was Andrew's pert rejoinder.

"Bide a bit—jist bide a bit. Hy," cried Kirsty, seemingly over the banister of the stair, to some unknown individual or individuals below. "Stap up this way, will ye?"

And fast upon the heels of this summons, in walked two justice of peace officers, who, despite the asseverations of Mr. Andrew Mickle-

whame that he was himself and no other, ordered him to don the brown greatcoat, and the shocking bad hat, and follow them.

"We've pursued you from Queensferry," said the first, "round by Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Stirling; and Grog the innkeeper is determined to punish you, unless you pay him for the eight weeks' board you had in his house, and our expenses over and above."

It was in vain that Mr. Micklewhame protested he had never been in Queensferry in his life; nor had he the honour of the acquaintance of Grog the innkeeper; but, at length, seeing that it was impossible to convince the officers to the contrary, he thought it advisable to pay the amount of their demand, and trust to law and justice afterwards for retribution. Even with this he found himself unable to comply—his purse, containing every rap he owned in the world, was in the pocket of his inexpressibles.

There was no help for it. With despair in his countenance, he donned the shabby brown greatcoat and the dilapidated Wellingtons, took the shocking bad hat in his hand, and in silence followed the officers of justice downstairs, determining to appeal to the generosity of the landlady, who, he had no doubt, would give full credence to his story.

The present mishap of Mr. Micklewhame had arisen solely from the fact of his having taken so much toddy overnight, which was the cause of his sleeping longer and more soundly in the morning than usual. Kirsty, ever vigilant, had gone to the door of the double-bedded room and knocked, at the same time calling out, with a stentorian voice, that "the omnibush was ready to start."

All this was unheeded by Andrew, who slept on, utterly unconscious of the progress of time. Not so, however, was it with the other occupant of the chamber; for no sooner did he hear Kirsty's summons than a lucky thought occurred to him; and he bawled through the door, in tones "not loud but deep," that he would be down instantly. He then proceeded, in the coolest manner possible, to adorn himself in the habiliments of his somniferous neighbour; which, he soon perceived, were "a world too wide" for him—a fault which he instantly remedied by the assistance of a pillow, disposed of after the manner he had seen greater actors than himself "make themselves up" for the character of Falstaff.

Thus equipped, he removed Andrew's watch from beneath the pillow, and placed it in the same pocket it had occupied the preceding day;

took off his portable bushy whiskers, and put them in his pocket ; then bidding adieu to his brown greatcoat and napless hat, which, with the accompaniment of a pair of well-worn Wellington boots, had been his only attire for many a day, he strode from the apartment, carefully shutting the door behind him. As he got to the foot of the stairs, there was Kirsty in the outer passage.

For a moment he felt undetermined what course next to pursue ; but his never-failing wit came to his aid, and stepping into a side room, the window of which looked out into the street, he desired Kirsty to bring him his bill of fare—*i.e.* the bill of fare peculiar to Mr. Andrew Micklewhame—and a sheet of writing-paper, with pens and ink. These being brought, and Kirsty having shut the door, leaving him “ all alone and in his glory,” he scribbled a few lines on the paper, and made it up in the form of a letter.

This was no sooner done, than the “ impatient bugle ”—*vulgo vocato*, tin horn—of the omnibus cad, who stood on the opposite side of the street, just behind the omnibus, holding open the door with his left hand, blew a blast so loud and shrill, that all those in waiting in the street, who had serious intentions of proceeding to Stirling by that conveyance, seemed of one accord, to know that it was their last warning ; so shaking hands with the friends who had come “ to see them off,” they scrambled nimbly up the steps of the omnibus, and passed from before the view of the bystanders into its ponderous interior.

Our actor saw this, and, without more ado, he opened the window and jumped into the street. His letter he deposited in the post office receiving-box, and his body in the omnibus, which, being now full, the cad banged to the door, gave the signal to the driver, and off the omnibus rattled ; nor did Kirsty or her mistress know of the escape-ment of their guest, whom they both believed to be Andrew Micklewhame, until he was a considerable part on his way to Stirling.

Kirsty was in the bar, stamping the postmark on some letters—for her mistress was postmaster—and talking to a young woman with bright eyes.

“ The villain that he is ! ” said Kirsty. “ A married man ! Wha wad hae thocht it ? an’ a play-actor too, crinky-patie ! He’ll be doon the noo, and ye’ll see him then. There’s twa gentlemen gaen up to him a wee while ago.”

At this moment the landlady opened the door of a parlour off the bar, and handed to Kirsty some letters, which she had been ostensibly arranging for delivery—in reality, making herself acquainted with their contents.

“Here’s six for delivery, and one to lie till called for.” Kirsty took them; and as her mistress shut the door, read aloud from the back of the letter “‘To lie till called for.’ The name, ‘Mrs. Isabella Young.’”

“What!” exclaimed the dark-eyed young woman, starting, “a letter for me?” And she almost snatched it out of Kirsty’s hand. A gleam of joy played upon her handsome face as she read—

“DEAR ISY—I enclose you a crown; if you want more, apply to Manager Trash for my arrears of salary. I’m off to Perth with the toggery of an old fellow who slept in the same room with me last night. They’ll perhaps talk of pursuing me; if so, detain them as long as possible, and follow at your leisure.

“Your affectionate

“PATRICK YOUNG.”

At this juncture appeared Andrew in the custody of the two officers; and the damsel of the dark eyes, taking her cue from the document she had just perused, rushed forward and threw herself into his arms, exclaiming, “My own, my lost one!—Oh, do not—do not drag my husband from me!” The latter part of her sentence was addressed to the officers of justice.

“Loshifycairyme!” cried Kirsty; “he’s lost his bonny black whiskers, and turned fatter nor he was!” Then, after a moment’s reflection, she added—“But thae player-buddies can do onything!”

“My pretty one,” said Andrew, “I know nothing of you!” Yet the young woman still clung to his embrace. “You vile woman,” he continued, waxing wroth, “get you gone. I’ll tell your husband if you don’t!” But Mrs. Young clung closer and closer to him. He then addressed himself to Kirsty, desiring her to inform her mistress that he wished to say a few words to her. “Tell her,” he continued, “that I am in great tribulation here, and I wish her to advance a small sum of money to these gentlemen, which will be returned with grateful thanks as soon as I get to Edinburgh.”

Kirsty grumbled a little at being sent on such an errand, but proceeded into the little parlour off the bar. In a few seconds she

returned, saying—"My mistress'll no advance money to ony man unless to her lawfu' husband; and she says gif ye like to marry her she'll do't, but no unless. I'm sure I dinna ken what she means, seeing ye're a married man already!"

"What!" exclaimed Andrew; "marry a woman I never saw?"

"On nae ither condition will she advance the money. Between oorsels, my mistress is worth at least twa thousand."

"Two thousand pounds!" thought Andrew. "The speculation wouldn't be such a bad one after all." And, after a show of hesitation, he gave a reluctant consent, as the only way, and a speedy one, to relieve him from his difficulties. His private debts amounted to at least a hundred pounds; and with two thousand pounds he could pay that, ay, and live like a prince besides.

The whole party was ushered into the little back parlour, where, to complete Andrew's amazement, he descried, seated over a cup of coffee, the identical Widow Brown to whom he had given the slip six years before. She rose and shook him by the hand.

"Be not amazed!" she said. "The moment I saw you, from the window of this room, enter my inn yesterday, I recognised you, and my love for you returned. I know all." She certainly did, for she had read Patrick Young's letter to his wife. "I shall procure your immediate release; and should you rue the consent you have just given, you are free to return to Edinburgh as you came—a single man!"

"Generous woman!" cried Andrew, sinking on one knee. "This—this is too much! Think ye I could again desert you? No, by heaven!"—Here he laid his hand upon his breast, and turned up the white of his eyes in an attempt to look pathetic. The widow raised him and led him to a seat. The officers were dismissed; and the damsel with the dark eyes escaped through the open door as they went out, fearful of being detained for her deceitful attempt upon the person of Andrew Micklewhame.

In a few days the nuptials were solemnised; and Andrew Micklewhame ever blessed the lucky chance that led him to Alloa.

History is silent regarding the ultimate fate of Mr. Patrick Young; but it is to be hoped that he was either hanged or sent to Botany Bay. Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Micklewhame thought it worth their while to pursue him for the injuries he had done them; and Grog the inn-keeper could not, for his myrmidons had lost the scent of the stroller from the moment he fled from Alloa.

DR. NORMAN MACLEOD
1812-1872

THE DOCTOR'S GHOST

A FRIEND of mine, a medical man, once went on a fishing expedition with an old college acquaintance, an army surgeon, whom he had not met for many years, from his having been in India with his regiment. M'Donald, the army surgeon, was a thorough Highlander, and slightly tinged with what is called the superstition of his countrymen, and at the time I speak of was liable to rather depressed spirits from an unsound liver. His native air was, however, rapidly renewing his youth ; and when he and his old friend paced along the banks of the fishing stream in a lonely part of Argyleshire, and sent their lines like airy gossamers over the pools, and touched the water over a salmon's nose, so temptingly that the best principled and wisest fish could not resist the bite, M'Donald had apparently regained all his buoyancy of spirit.

They had been fishing together for about a week with great success, when M'Donald proposed to pay a visit to a family with which he was acquainted, that would separate him from his friend for some days. But whenever he spoke of their intended separation, he sank down into his old gloomy state, at one time declaring that he felt as if they were never to meet again. My friend tried to rally him, but in vain. They parted at the trouting stream, M'Donald's route being across a mountain pass, with which, however, he had been well acquainted in his youth, though the road was lonely and wild in the extreme.

The doctor returned early in the evening to his resting-place, which was a shepherd's house lying on the very outskirts of the "settlements," and beside a foaming mountain stream. The shepherd's only attendants at the time were two herd lads and three dogs. Attached to the hut, and communicating with it by a short passage, was rather a comfortable room which "the Laird" had fitted up to serve as a sort of lodge for himself in the midst of his shooting-ground, and which he had put for a fortnight at the disposal of my friend.

Shortly after sunset on the day I mention the wind began to rise suddenly to a gale, the rain descended in torrents, and the night became extremely dark. The shepherd seemed uneasy, and several times went to the door to inspect the weather. At last he roused the

fears of the doctor for M'Donald's safety, by expressing the *hope* that by this time he was "owre that awfu' black moss, and across the red burn."

Every traveller in the Highlands knows how rapidly these mountain streams rise, and how confusing the moor becomes in a dark night. The confusion of memory once a doubt is suggested, the utter mystery of places, becomes, as I know from experience, quite indescribable.

"The black moss and red burn" were words that were never after forgot by the doctor, from the strange feelings they produced when first heard that night; for there came into his mind terrible thoughts and forebodings about poor M'Donald, and reproaches for never having considered his possible danger in attempting such a journey alone. In vain the shepherd assured him that he must have reached a place of safety before the darkness and the storm came on. A presentiment which he could not cast off made him so miserable that he could hardly refrain from tears. But nothing could be done to relieve the anxiety now become so painful.

The doctor at last retired to bed about midnight. For a long time he could not sleep. The raging of the stream below the small window, and the *thuds* of the storm, made him feverish and restless. But at last he fell into a sound and dreamless sleep. Out of this, however, he was suddenly roused by a peculiar noise in his room, not very loud, but utterly indescribable. He heard tap, tap, tap at the window; and he knew, from the relation which the wall of the room bore to the rock, that the glass could not be touched by human hand.

After listening for a moment, and forcing himself to smile at his nervousness, he turned round, and began again to seek repose. But now a noise began, too near and loud to make sleep possible. Starting and sitting up in bed, he heard repeated in rapid succession, as if some one was spitting in anger, and close to his bed,—"*Fit! fit! fit!*" and then a prolonged "*whir-r-r-r*" from another part of the room, while every chair began to move, and the table to jerk!

The doctor remained in breathless silence, with every faculty intensely acute. He frankly confessed that he heard his heart beating, for the sound was so unearthly, so horrible, and something seemed to come so near him, that he began seriously to consider whether or not he had some attack of fever which affected his brain—for, remember, he had not tasted a drop of the shepherd's small store of whisky! He felt his pulse, composed his spirits, and compelled himself to exercise

calm judgment. Straining his eyes to discover anything he plainly saw at last a white object moving, but without sound, before him. He knew that the door was shut and the window also.

An overpowering conviction then seized him, which he could not resist, that his friend M'Donald was dead ! By an effort he seized a lucifer-box on a chair beside him, and struck a light. No white object could be seen. The room appeared to be as when he went to bed. The door was shut. He looked at his watch, and particularly marked that the hour was twenty-two minutes past three. But the match was hardly extinguished when, louder than ever, the same unearthly cry of " Fit ! fit ! fit ! " was heard, followed by the same horrible whir-r-r, which made his teeth chatter. Then the movement of the table and every chair in the room was resumed with increased violence, while the tapping on the window was heard above the storm. There was no bell in the room, but the doctor, on hearing all this frightful confusion of sounds again repeated, and beholding the white object moving towards him in terrible silence, began to thump the wooden partition and to shout at the top of his voice for the shepherd, and having done so, he dived his head under the blankets !

The shepherd soon made his appearance, in his night-shirt, with a small oil-lamp, or " crusey," over his head, anxiously inquiring as he entered the room :

" What is't, doctor ? What's wrang ? Pity me, are ye ill ? "

" Very ! " cried the doctor. But before he could give any explanation a loud whir-r-r was heard, with the old cry of " Fit ! " close to the shepherd, while two chairs fell at his feet ! The shepherd sprang back, with a half scream of terror ! the lamp was dashed to the ground, and the door violently shut.

" Come back ! " shouted the doctor. " Come back, Duncan, instantly, I command you ! "

The shepherd opened the door very partially, and said, in terrified accents :

" Gude be aboot us, that was awfu' ! What under heaven is't ? "

" Heaven knows, Duncan," ejaculated the doctor with agitated voice, " but do pick up the lamp, and I shall strike a light."

Duncan did so in no small fear ; but as he made his way to the bed in the darkness, to get a match from the doctor, something caught his foot ; he fell ; and then, amidst the same noises and tumults of chairs, which immediately filled the apartment, the " Fit ! fit ! fit ! fit ! " was prolonged with more vehemence than ever !

The doctor sprang up, and made his way out of the room, but his feet were several times tripped by some unknown power, so that he had the greatest difficulty in reaching the door without a fall. He was followed by Duncan, and both rushed out of the room, shutting the door after them. A new light having been obtained, they both returned with extreme caution, and, it must be added, real fear, in the hope of finding some cause or other for all those terrifying signs.

Would it surprise our readers to hear that they searched the room in vain?—that, after minutely examining under the table, chairs, bed, everywhere, and with the door shut, not a trace could be found of anything? Would they believe that they heard during the day how poor M'Donald had staggered, half-dead from fatigue, into his friend's house, and falling into a fit, had died at *twenty-two minutes past three* that morning? We do not ask any one to accept of all this as true. But we pledge our honour to the following facts:

The doctor, after the day's fishing was over, had packed his rod so as to take it into his bedroom; but he had left a minnow attached to the hook. A white cat left in the room swallowed the minnow and was hooked. The unfortunate gourmand had vehemently protested against this intrusion into its upper lip by the violent "Fit! fit! fit!" with which she tried to spit the hook out; the reel added the mysterious whir-r-r-r; and the disengaged line, getting entangled in the legs of the chairs and table, as the hooked cat attempted to flee from her tormentor, set the furniture in motion, and tripped up both shepherd and doctor; while an ivy-branch kept tapping at the window! Will any one doubt the existence of ghosts and a spirit-world after this?

I have only to add that the doctor's skill was employed during the night in cutting the hook out of the cat's lip, while his poor patient, yet most impatient, was held by the shepherd in a bag, the head alone of puss, with hook and minnow, being visible. M'Donald made his appearance in a day or two, rejoicing once more to see his friend, and greatly enjoying the ghost story. As the doctor finished the history of his night's horrors, he could not help laying down a proposition very dogmatically to his half-superstitious friends, and as some amends for his own terror.

"Depend upon it," said he, "if we could thoroughly examine into all the stories of ghosts and apparitions, spirit-rapping, *et hoc genus omne*, they would turn out to be every bit as true as my own visit from the world of spirits; that all that sort of thing is—*great humbug and nonsense*."

W. E. AYTOUN

1818-1865

THE MAN IN THE BELL

IN my younger days bell-ringing was much more in fashion among the young men of — than it is now. Nobody, I believe, practises it there at present except the servants of the church, and the melody has been much injured in consequence. Some fifty years ago about twenty of us who dwelt in the vicinity of the cathedral formed a club, which used to ring every peal that was called for ; and from continual practice and a rivalry which arose between us and a club attached to another steeple, and which tended considerably to sharpen our zeal, we became very Mozarts on our favourite instruments. But my bell-ringing practice was shortened by a singular accident, which not only stopped my performance, but made even the sound of a bell terrible to my ears.

One Sunday I went with another into the belfry to ring for noon prayers, but the second stroke we had pulled showed us that the clapper of the bell we were at was muffled. Some one had been buried that morning, and it had been prepared, of course, to ring a mournful note. We did not know of this, but the remedy was easy.

“ Jack,” said my companion, “ step up to the loft and cut off the hat ” ; for the way we had of muffling was by tying a piece of an old hat, or of cloth (the former was preferred), to one side of the clapper, which deadened every second toll.

I complied, and mounting into the belfry, crept as usual into the bell, where I began to cut away. The hat had been tied on in some more complicated manner than usual, and I was perhaps three or four minutes in getting it off, during which time my companion below was hastily called away, by a message from his sweetheart, I believe ; but that is not material to my story.

The person who called him was a brother of the club, who, knowing that the time had come for ringing for service, and not thinking that any one was above, began to pull. At this moment I was just getting out, when I felt the bell moving ; I guessed the reason at once—it was a moment of terror ; but by a hasty, and almost convulsive effort, I

succeeded in jumping down, and throwing myself on the flat of my back under the bell.

The room in which it was was little more than sufficient to contain it, the bottom of the bell coming within a couple of feet of the floor of lath. At that time I certainly was not so bulky as I am now, but as I lay it was within an inch of my face. I had not laid myself down a second when the ringing began. It was a dreadful situation. Over me swung an immense mass of metal, one touch of which would have crushed me to pieces ; the floor under me was principally composed of crazy laths, and if they gave way, I was precipitated to the distance of about fifty feet upon a loft, which would, in all probability, have sunk under the impulse of my fall, and sent me to be dashed to atoms upon the marble floor of the chancel, a hundred feet below.

I remembered—for fear is quick in recollection—how a common clock-wright, about a month before, had fallen, and bursting through the floors of the steeple, driven in the ceilings of the porch, and even broken into the marble tombstone of a bishop who slept beneath. This was my first terror, but the ringing had not continued a minute before a more awful and immediate dread came on me. The deafening sound of the bell smote into my ears with a thunder which made me fear their drums would crack. There was not a fibre of my body it did not thrill through ! it entered my very soul ; thought and reflection were almost utterly banished ; I only retained the sensation of agonising terror.

Every moment I saw the bell sweep within an inch of my face ; and my eyes—I could not close them, though to look at the object was bitter as death—followed it instinctively in its oscillating progress until it came back again. It was in vain I said to myself that it could come no nearer at any future swing than it did at first ; every time it descended I endeavoured to shrink into the very floor to avoid being buried under the down-sweeping mass ; and then reflecting on the danger of pressing too weightily on my frail support, would cower up again as far as I dared.

At first my fears were mere matter of fact. I was afraid the pulleys above would give way and let the bell plunge on me. At another time the possibility of the clapper being shot out in some sweep, and dashing through my body, as I had seen a ramrod glide through a door, flitted across my mind. The dread also, as I have already mentioned, of the crazy floor, tormented me ; but these soon gave way to fears not more unfounded, but more visionary, and of course more

tremendous. The roaring of the bell confused my intellect, and my fancy soon began to teem with all sorts of strange and terrifying ideas. The bell pealing above, and opening its jaws with a hideous clamour, seemed to me at one time a ravening monster, raging to devour me ; at another, a whirlpool ready to suck me into its bellowing abyss.

As I gazed on it, it assumed all shapes ; it was a flying eagle, or rather a roc of the Arabian story-tellers, clapping its wings and screaming over me. As I looked upwards into it, it would appear sometimes to lengthen into indefinite extent, or to be twisted at the end into the spiral folds of the tail of a flying-dragon. Nor was the flaming breath, or fiery glance of that fabled animal, wanting to complete the picture. My eyes, inflamed, bloodshot, and glaring, invested the supposed monster with a full proportion of unholy light.

It would be endless were I to merely hint at all the fancies that possessed my mind. Every object that was hideous and roaring presented itself to my imagination. I often thought that I was in a hurricane at sea, and that the vessel in which I was embarked tossed under me with the most furious vehemence. The air, set in motion by the swinging of the bell, blew over me, nearly with the violence, and more than the thunder, of a tempest ; and the floor seemed to reel under me, as under a drunken man.

But the most awful of all the ideas that seized on me were drawn from the supernatural. In the vast cavern of the bell hideous faces appeared, and glared down on me with terrifying frowns, or with grinning mockery, still more appalling. At last the devil himself, accoutred, as in the common description of the evil spirit, with hoof, horn, and tail, and eyes of infernal lustre, made his appearance, and called on me to curse God and worship him, who was powerful to save me. This dread suggestion he uttered with the full-toned clangour of the bell. I had him within an inch of me, and I thought on the fate of the Santon Barsisa. Strenuously and desperately I defied him, and bade him begone.

Reason then, for a moment, resumed her sway, but it was only to fill me with fresh terror, just as the lightning dispels the gloom that surrounds the benighted mariner, but to show him that his vessel is driving on a rock, where she must inevitably be dashed to pieces. I found I was becoming delirious, and trembled lest reason should utterly desert me. This is at all times an agonising thought, but it smote me then with tenfold agony. I feared lest, when utterly deprived of

my senses, I should rise, to do which I was every moment tempted by that strange feeling which calls on a man, whose head is dizzy from standing on the battlement of a lofty castle, to precipitate himself from it, and then death would be instant and tremendous.

When I thought of this I became desperate. I caught the floor with a grasp which drove the blood from my nails ; and I yelled with the cry of despair. I called for help, I prayed, I shouted, but all the efforts of my voice were, of course, drowned in the bell. As it passed over my mouth it occasionally echoed my cries, which mixed not with its own sound, but preserved their distinct character. Perhaps this was but fancy. To me, I know, they then sounded as if they were the shouting, howling, or laughing of the fiends with which my imagination had peopled the gloomy cave which swung over me.

You may accuse me of exaggerating my feelings ; but I am not. Many a scene of dread have I since passed through, but they are nothing to the self-inflicted terrors of this half hour. The ancients have doomed one of the damned in their Tartarus to lie under a rock, which every moment seems to be descending to annihilate him—and an awful punishment it would be. But if to this you add a clamour as loud as if ten thousand furies were howling about you—a deafening uproar banishing reason, and driving you to madness, you must allow that the bitterness of the pang was rendered more terrible. There is no man, firm as his nerves may be, who could retain his courage in this situation.

In twenty minutes the ringing was done. Half of that time passed over me without power of computation—the other half appeared an age. When it ceased, I became gradually more quiet, but a new fear retained me. I knew that five minutes would elapse without ringing, but at the end of that short time the bell would be rung a second time, for five minutes more. I could not calculate time. A minute and an hour were of equal duration. I feared to rise, lest the five minutes should have elapsed, and the ringing be again commenced, in which case I should be crushed, before I could escape, against the walls or framework of the bell. I therefore still continued to lie down, cautiously shifting myself, however, with a careful gliding, so that my eye no longer looked into the hollow.

This was of itself a considerable relief. The cessation of the noise had, in a great measure, the effect of stupefying me, for my attention, being no longer occupied by the chimeras I had conjured up, began to flag. All that now distressed me was the constant expectation of the

second ringing, for which, however, I settled myself with a kind of stupid resolution. I closed my eyes, and clenched my teeth as firmly as if they were screwed in a vice. At last the dreaded moment came, and the first swing of the bell extorted a groan from me, as they say the most resolute victim screams at the sight of the rack, to which he is for a second time destined. After this, however, I lay silent and lethargic, without a thought. Wrapped in the defensive armour of stupidity, I defied the bell and its intonations. When it ceased, I was roused a little by the hope of escape. I did not, however, decide on this step hastily, but, putting up my hand with the utmost caution, I touched the rim.

Though the ringing had ceased, it still was tremulous from the sound, and shook under my hand, which instantly recoiled as from an electric jar. A quarter of an hour probably elapsed before I again dared to make the experiment, and then I found it at rest. I determined to lose no time, fearing that I might have delayed already too long, and that the bell for evening service would catch me. This dread stimulated me, and I slipped out with the utmost rapidity and arose. I stood, I suppose, for a minute, looking with silly wonder on the place of my imprisonment, penetrated with joy at escaping, but then rushed down the stony and irregular stair with the velocity of lightning, and arrived in the bell-ringer's room. This was the last act I had power to accomplish. I leaned against the wall, motionless and deprived of thought, in which posture my companions found me, when, in the course of a couple of hours, they returned to their occupation.

They were shocked, as well they might, at the figure before them. The wind of the bell had excoriated my face, and my dim and stupefied eyes were fixed with a lack-lustre gaze in my raw eyelids. My hands were torn and bleeding, my hair dishevelled, and my clothes tattered. They spoke to me, but I gave no answer. They shook me, but I remained insensible. They then became alarmed, and hastened to remove me. He who had first gone up with me in the forenoon met them as they carried me through the churchyard, and through him, who was shocked at having, in some measure, occasioned the accident, the cause of my misfortune was discovered. I was put to bed at home, and remained for three days delirious, but gradually recovered my senses.

You may be sure the bell formed a prominent topic of my ravings, and if I heard a peal, they were instantly increased to the utmost

violence. Even when the delirium abated, my sleep was continually disturbed by imagined ringings, and my dreams were haunted by the fancies which almost maddened me while in the steeple. My friends removed me to a house in the country, which was sufficiently distant from any place of worship to save me from the apprehensions of hearing the church-going bell ; for what Alexander Selkirk, in Cowper's poem, complained of as a misfortune, was then to me as a blessing.

Here I recovered ; but, even long after recovery, if a gale wafted the notes of a peal towards me, I started with nervous apprehension. I felt a Mahometan hatred to all the bell tribe, and envied the subjects of the Commander of the Faithful the sonorous voice of their Muezzin. Time cured this, as it does the most of our follies ; but, even at the present day, if, by chance, my nerves be unstrung, some particular tones of the cathedral bell have power to surprise me into a momentary start.

GEORGE MACDONALD

1824-1905

THE WOW O' RIVVEN

ELSIE SCOTT had let her work fall on her knees, and her hands on her work, and was looking out of the wide, low window of her room, which was on one of the ground-floors of the village street. Through a gap in the household shrubbery of fuchsias and myrtles filling the window-sill, one passing on the foot-pavement might get a momentary glimpse of her pale face, lighted up with two blue eyes, over which some inward trouble had spread a faint, gauze-like haziness. But almost before her thoughts had had time to wander back to this trouble, a shout of children's voices, at the other end of the street, reached her ear. She listened a moment. A shadow of displeasure and pain crossed her countenance ; and rising hastily, she betook herself to an inner apartment, and closed the door behind her.

Meantime the sounds drew nearer ; and by-and-by an old man, whose strange appearance and dress showed that he had little capacity either for good or evil, passed the window. His clothes were comfortable enough in quality and condition, for they were the annual gift of a benevolent lady in the neighbourhood ; but, being made to accommodate his taste, both known and traditional, they were somewhat peculiar in cut and adornment.

Both coat and trousers were of a dark grey cloth ; but the former, which in its shape partook of the military, had a straight collar of yellow, and narrow cuffs of the same ; while upon both sleeves, about the place where a corporal wears his stripes, was expressed, in the same yellow cloth, a somewhat singular device. It was as close an imitation of a bell, with its tongue hanging out of its mouth, as the tailor's skill could produce from a single piece of cloth. The origin of the military cut of his coat was well known. His preference for it arose in the time of the wars of the first Napoleon, when the threatened invasion of the country caused the organisation of many volunteer regiments.

The martial show and exercises captivated the poor man's fancy ; and from that time forward nothing pleased his vanity, and consequently conciliated his good-will more, than to style him by his

favourite title—the *Colonel*. But the badge on his arm had a deeper origin, which will be partially manifest in the course of the story—if story it can be called. It was, indeed, the baptism of the fool, the outward and visible sign of his relation to the infinite and unseen. His countenance, however, although the features were not of any peculiarly low or animal type, showed no corresponding sign of the consciousness of such a relation, being as vacant as human countenance could well be.

The cause of Elsie's annoyance was that the fool was annoyed ; he was followed by a troop of boys, who turned his rank into scorn, and assailed him with epithets hateful to him. Although the most harmless of creatures when let alone, he was dangerous when roused ; and now he stooped repeatedly to pick up stones and hurl them at his tormentors, who took care, while abusing him, to keep at a considerable distance, lest he should get hold of them.

Amidst the sounds of derision that followed him, might be heard the words frequently repeated—" *Come hame, come hame.*" But in a few minutes the noise ceased, either from the interference of some friendly inhabitant, or that the boys grew weary, and departed in search of other amusement. By-and-by Elsie might be seen again at her work in the window ; but the cloud over her eyes was deeper, and her whole face more sad.

Indeed, so much did the persecution of this poor man affect her, that an onlooker would have been compelled to seek the cause in some yet deeper sympathy than that commonly felt for the oppressed, even by women. And such a sympathy existed, strange as it may seem, between the beautiful girl (for many called her *a bonnie lassie*) and this "tatter of humanity." Nothing would have been farther from the thoughts of those that knew them, than the supposition of any correspondence or connection between them ; yet this sympathy sprang in part from a real similarity in their history and present condition.

All the facts that were known about *Feel Jock's* origin were these : that seventy years ago, a man who had gone with his horse and cart some miles from the village, to fetch home a load of peat from a desolate *moss*, had heard, while toiling along as rough a road on as lonely a hill-side as any in Scotland, the cry of a child ; and, searching about, had found the infant, hardly wrapped in rags, and untended, as if the earth herself had just given him birth—that desert moor, wide and dismal, broken and watery, the only bosom for him to lie upon, and the cold,

clear night-heaven his only covering. The man had brought him home, and the parish had taken parish-care of him.

He had grown up, and proved what he now was—almost an idiot. Many of the townspeople were kind to him, and employed him in fetching water for them from the river or wells in the neighbourhood, paying him for his trouble in victuals, or whisky, of which he was very fond. He seldom spoke ; and the sentences he could utter were few ; yet the tone, and even the words of his limited vocabulary, were sufficient to express gratitude and some measure of love towards those who were kind to him, and hatred of those who teased and insulted him. He lived a life without aim, and apparently to no purpose ; in this resembling most of his more gifted fellow-men, who, with all the tools and materials necessary for building a noble mansion, are yet content with a clay hut.

Elsie, on the contrary, had been born in a comfortable farm-house, amidst homeliness and abundance. But at a very early age she had lost both father and mother ; not so early, however, but that she had faint memories of warm soft times on her mother's bosom, and of refuge in her mother's arms from the attacks of geese, and the pursuit of pigs. Therefore, in after-times, when she looked forward to heaven, it was as much a reverting to the old heavenly times of childhood and mother's love, as an anticipation of something yet to be revealed.

Indeed, without some such memory, how should we ever picture to ourselves a perfect rest ? But sometimes it would seem as if the more a heart was made capable of loving, the less it had to love ; and poor Elsie, in passing from a mother's to a brother's guardianship, felt a change of spiritual temperature too keen. He was not a bad man, or incapable of benevolence when touched by the sight of want in anything of which he would himself have felt the privation ; but he was so coarsely made, that only the purest animal necessities affected him, and a hard word, or unfeeling speech, could never have reached the quick of his nature, through the hide that enclosed it. Elsie, on the contrary, was excessively and painfully sensitive, as if her nature constantly portended an invisible multitude of half-spiritual, half-nervous antennæ, which shrank and trembled in every current of air at all below their own temperature.

The effect of this upon her behaviour was such that she was called odd ; and the poor girl felt she was not like other people, yet could not help it. Her brother, too, laughed at her without the slightest idea of

the pain he occasioned, or the remotest feeling of curiosity as to what the inward and consistent causes of the outward abnormal condition might be. Tenderness was the divine comforting she needed ; and it was altogether absent from her brother's character and behaviour.

Her neighbours looked on her with some interest, but they rather shunned than courted her acquaintance ; especially after the return of certain nervous attacks to which she had been subject in childhood, and which were again brought on by the events I must relate. It is curious how certain diseases repel, by a kind of awe, the sympathies of the neighbours : as if, by the fact of being subject to them, the patient were removed into another realm of existence, from which, like the dead with the living, she can hold communion with those around her only partially, and with a mixture of dread pervading the intercourse.

Thus some of the deepest, purest wells of spiritual life, are, like those in old castles, choked up by the decay of the outer walls. But what tended more than anything, perhaps, to keep up the painful unrest of her soul (for the beauty of her character was evident in the fact, that the irritation seldom reached her *mind*), was a circumstance at which, in its present connection, some of my readers will smile, and others feel a shudder corresponding in kind to that of Elsie.

Her brother was very fond of a rather small, but ferocious-looking bull-dog, which followed close at his heels, wherever he went, with hanging head and slouching gait, never leaping or racing about like other dogs. When in the house, he always lay under his master's chair. He seemed to dislike Elsie, and she felt an unspeakable repugnance to him.

Though she never mentioned her aversion, her brother easily saw it by the way in which she avoided the animal ; and attributing it entirely to fear—which indeed had a great share in the matter—he would cruelly aggravate it, by telling her stories of the fierce hardihood and relentless persistency of this kind of animal. He dared not yet further increase her terror by offering to set the creature upon her, because it was doubtful whether he might be able to restrain him ; but the mental suffering which he occasioned by this heartless conduct, and for which he had no sympathy, was as severe as many bodily sufferings to which he would have been sorry to subject her. Whenever the poor girl happened inadvertently to pass near the dog, which was seldom, a low growl made her aware of his proximity, and drove her to a quick retreat.

He was, in fact, the animal impersonation of the animal opposition which she had continually to endure. Like chooses like ; and the bull-dog *in* her brother made choice of the bull-dog *out of* him for his companion. So her day was one of shrinking fear and multiform discomfort.

But a nature capable of so much distress must of necessity be *capable* of a corresponding amount of pleasure ; and in her case this was manifest in the fact, that sleep and the quiet of her own room restored her wonderfully. If she was only let alone, a calm mood, filled with images of pleasure, soon took possession of her mind.

Her acquaintance with the fool had commenced some ten years previous to the time I write of, when she was quite a little girl, and had come from the country with her brother, who, having taken a small farm close to the town, preferred residing in the town to occupying the farm-house, which was not comfortable. She looked at first with some terror on his uncouth appearance, and with much wonderment on his strange dress.

This wonder was heightened by a conversation she overheard one day in the street between the fool and a little pale-faced boy, who, approaching him respectfully, said, " Weel, cornel ! "

" Weel, laddie ! " was the reply.

" Fat dis the wow say, cornel ? "

" Come hame, come hame ! " answered the *colonel*, with both accent and quantity heaped on the word *hame*.

What the *wow* could be, she had no idea ; only, as the years passed on, the strange word became in her mind indescribably associated with the strange shape in yellow cloth on his sleeves. Had she been a native of the town, she could not have failed to know its import, so familiar was every one with it, although it did not belong to the local vocabulary ; but, as it was, years passed away before she discovered its meaning. And when, again and again, the fool, attempting to convey his gratitude for some kindness she had shown him, mumbled over the words—" *The wow o' Rivven—the wow o' Rivven,*" the wonder would return as to what could be the idea associated with them in his mind, but she made no advance towards their explanation.

That, however, which most attracted her to the old man, was his persecution by the children. They were to him what the bull-dog was to her—the constant source of irritation and annoyance. They could hardly hurt him, nor did he appear to dread other injury from them

than insult, to which, fool though he was, he was keenly alive. Human gad-flies that they were ! they sometimes stung him beyond endurance, and he would curse them in the impotence of his anger.

Once or twice Elsie had been so far carried beyond her constitutional timidity, by sympathy for the distress of her friend, that she had gone out and talked to the boys,—even scolded them, so that they slunk away ashamed, and began to stand as much in dread of her as of the clutches of their prey. So she, gentle and timid to excess, acquired among them the reputation of a termagant. Popular opinion among children, as among men, is often just, but as often very unjust ; for the same manifestations may proceed from opposite principles ; and, therefore, as indices to character, may mislead as often as enlighten.

Next door to the house in which Elsie resided, dwelt a tradesman and his wife, who kept an indefinite sort of shop in which various kinds of goods were exposed for sale. Their youngest son was about the same age as Elsie ; and while they were rather more than children, and less than young people, he spent many of his evenings with her, somewhat to the loss of position in his classes at the parish school. They were, indeed, much attached to each other ; and, peculiarly constituted as Elsie was, one may imagine what kind of heavenly messenger a companion stronger than herself must have been to her.

In fact, if she could have framed the undefinable need of her child-like nature into an articulate prayer, it would have been—" Give me some one to love me stronger than I."

Any love was helpful, yes, in its degree saving to her poor troubled soul ; but the hope, as they grew older together, that the powerful, yet tender-hearted youth, really loved her, and would one day make her his wife, was like the opening of heavenly eyes of life and love in the hitherto blank and deathlike face of her existence. But nothing had been said of love, although they met and parted like lovers.

Doubtless, if the circles of their thought and feeling had continued as now to intersect each other, there would have been no interruption to their affection ; but the time at length arrived when the old couple, seeing the rest of their family comfortably settled in life, resolved to make a gentleman of the youngest ; and so sent him from school to college. The facilities existing in Scotland for providing a professional training enabled them to educate him as a surgeon. He parted from Elsie with some regret ; but, far less dependent on her than she was on him, and full of the prospects of the future, he felt none of that sink-

ing at the heart which seemed to lay her whole nature open to a fresh inroad of all the terrors and sorrows of her peculiar existence. No correspondence took place between them. New pursuits and relations and the development of his tastes and judgments, entirely altered the position of poor Elsie in his memory.

Having been, during their intercourse, far less of a man than she of a woman, he had no definite idea of the place he had occupied in her regard ; and in his mind she receded into the background of the past, without his having any idea that she would suffer thereby, or that he was unjust towards her ; while, in her thoughts, his image stood in the highest and clearest relief. It was the centre-point from which and towards which all lines radiated and converged, and although she could not but be doubtful about the future, yet there was much hope mingled with her doubts.

But when, at the close of two years, he visited his native village, and she saw before her, instead of the homely youth who had left her that winter evening, one who, to her inexperienced eyes, appeared a finished gentleman, her heart sank within her, as if she had found Nature herself false in her ripening processes, destroying the beautiful promise of a former year by changing instead of developing her creations. He spoke kindly to her, but not cordially. To her ear the voice seemed to come from a great distance out of the past ; and while she looked upon him, that optical change passed over her vision which all have experienced after gazing abstractedly on any object for a time : his form grew very small, and receded to an immeasurable distance ; till, her imagination mingling with the twilight haze of her senses, she seemed to see him standing far off on a hill, with the bright horizon of sunset for a background to his clearly-defined figure.

She knew no more till she found herself in bed in the dark ; and the first message that reached her from the outward world was the infernal growl of the bull-dog from the room below. Next day she saw her lover walking with two ladies, who would have thought it some degree of condescension to speak to her ; and he passed the house without once looking towards it.

One who is sufficiently possessed by the demon of nervousness to be glad of the magnetic influences of a friend's company in a public promenade, or of a horse beneath him in passing through a churchyard, will have some faint idea of how utterly exposed and defenceless poor Elsie now felt on the crowded thoroughfare of life.

And so the insensibility which had overtaken her was not the ordinary swoon with which nature relieves the overstrained nerves, but the return of the epileptic fits of her early childhood ; and if the condition of the poor girl had been pitiable before, it was tenfold more so now. Yet she did not complain, but bore all in silence, though it was evident that her health was giving way. But now, help came to her from a strange quarter ; though many might not be willing to accord the name of help to that which rather hastened than retarded the progress of her decline.

She had gone to spend a few of the summer days with a relative in the country, some miles from her home, if home it could be called. One evening, towards sunset, she went out for a solitary walk. Passing from the little garden gate, she went along a bare country road for some distance, and then, turning aside by a footpath through a thicket of low trees, she came out in a lonely little churchyard on the hillside.

Hardly knowing whether or not she had intended to go there, she seated herself on a mound covered with long grass, one of many. Before her stood the ruins of an old church, which was taking centuries to crumble. Little remained but the gable-wall, immensely thick, and covered with ancient ivy. The rays of the setting sun fell on a mound at its foot, not green like the rest, but of a rich red-brown in the rosy sunset, and evidently but newly heaped up. Her eyes, too, rested upon it. Slowly the sun sank below the near horizon.

As the last brilliant point disappeared, the ivy darkened, and a wind arose and shook all its leaves, making them look cold and troubled ; and to Elsie's ear came a low faint sound, as from a far-off bell. But close beside her—and she started and shivered at the sound—rose a deep, monotonous, almost sepulchral voice, "*Come hame, come hame ! The wow, the wow !*"

At once she understood the whole. She sat in the churchyard of the ancient parish church of Ruthven ; and when she lifted up her eyes, there she saw, in the half-ruined belfry, the old bell, all but hidden with ivy, which the passing wind had roused to utter one sleepy tone ; and there, beside her, stood the fool with the bell on his arm, and to him and to her the *wow o' Rivven* said, "*Come hame, come hame !*"

Ah, what did she want in the whole universe of God but a home ? And though the ground beneath was hard, and the sky overhead far and boundless, and the hillside lonely and companionless, yet somewhere within the visible, and beyond these the outer surfaces of creation,

there might be a home for her ; as round the wintry house the snows lie heaped up cold and white and dreary all the long *forenight*, while within, beyond the closed shutters, and giving no glimmer through the thick stone walls, the fires are blazing joyously and the voices and laughter of young unfrozen children are heard, and nothing belongs to winter but the grey hairs on the heads of the parents, within whose warm hearts child-like voices are heard, and child-like thoughts move to and fro. The kernel of winter itself is spring, or a sleeping summer.

It was no wonder that the fool, cast out of the earth on a far more desolate spot than this, should seek to return within her bosom at this place of open doors, and should call it *home*. For surely the surface of the earth had no home for him. The mound at the foot of the gable contained the body of one who had shown him kindness. He had followed the funeral that afternoon from the town, and had remained behind with the bell. Indeed it was his custom, though Elsie had not known it, to follow every funeral going to this, his favourite churchyard of Ruthven ; and, possibly in imitation of its booming, for it was still tolled at the funerals, he had given the old bell the name of *the wow*, and had translated its monotonous clangour into the articulate sounds—*come hame, come hame*.

What precise meaning he attached to the words it is impossible to say ; but it was evident that the place possessed a strange attraction for him, drawing him towards it by the cords of some spiritual magnetism. It is possible that in the mind of the idiot there may have been some feeling about this churchyard and bell, which, in the mind of another, would have become a grand poetic thought ; a feeling as if the ghostly old bell hung at the church-door of the invisible world, and ever and anon rung out joyous notes (though they sounded sad in the ears of the living), calling to the children of the unseen to *come home, come home*. She sat for some time in silence ; for the bell did not ring again, and the fool spoke no more ; till the dew began to fall, when she rose and went home, followed by her companion, who passed the night in the barn.

From that hour Elsie was furnished with a visual image of the rest she sought ; an image which, mingling with deeper and holier thoughts, became, like the bow set in the cloud, the earthly pledge and sign of the fulfilment of heavenly hopes. Often when the wintry fog of cold discomfort and homelessness filled her soul, all at once the picture of the

little churchyard—with the old gable and belfry, and the slanting sunlight steeping down to the very roots of the long grass on the graves—arose in the darkened chamber (*camera obscura*) of her soul; and again she heard the faint Æolian sound of the bell, and the voice of the prophet-fool who interpreted the oracle; and the inward weariness was soothed by the promise of a long sleep.

Who can tell how many have been counted fools simply because they were prophets; or how much of the madness in the world may be the utterance of thoughts true and just, but belonging to a region differing from ours in its nature and scenery!

But to Elsie looking out of her window came the mocking tones of the idle boys who had chosen as the vehicle of their scorn the very words which showed the relation of the fool to the eternal, and revealed in him an element higher far than any yet developed in them. They turned his glory into shame, like the enemies of David when they mocked the would-be king. And the best in a man is often that which is most condemned by those who have not attained to his goodness. The words, however, even as repeated by the boys, had not solely awakened indignation at the persecution of the old man: they had likewise comforted her with the thought of the refuge that awaited both him and her.

But the same evening a worse trial was in store for her. Again she sat near the window, oppressed by the consciousness that her brother had come in. He had gone upstairs, and his dog had remained at the door, exchanging surly compliments with some of his own kind, when the fool came strolling past, and, I do not know from what cause, the dog flew at him. Elsie heard his cry and looked up. Her fear of the brute vanished in a moment before her sympathy for her friend. She darted from the house, and rushed towards the dog to drag him off the defenceless idiot, calling him by his name in a tone of anger and dislike. He left the fool, and, springing at Elsie, seized her by the arm above the elbow with such a grip that, in the midst of her agony, she fancied she heard the bone crack. But she uttered no cry, for the most apprehensive are sometimes the most courageous.

Just then, however, her former lover was coming along the street, and, catching a glimpse of what had happened, was on the spot in an instant, took the dog by the throat with a grip not inferior to his own, and having thus compelled him to relax his hold, dashed him on the ground with a force that almost stunned him, and then with a super-

added kick sent him away limping and howling ; whereupon the fool, attacking him furiously with a stick, would certainly have finished him, had not his master descried his plight and come to his rescue.

Meantime the young surgeon had carried Elsie into the house ; for, as soon as she was rescued from the dog, she had fallen down in one of her fits, which were becoming more and more frequent of themselves, and little needed such a shock as this to increase their violence. He was dressing her arm when she began to recover ; and when she opened her eyes, in a state of half-consciousness, the first object she beheld was his face bending over her. Recalling nothing of what had occurred, it seemed to her, in the dreamy condition in which the fit had left her, the same face, unchanged, which had once shone in upon her tardy springtime, and promised to ripen it into summer. She forgot it had departed and left her in the wintry cold.

And so she uttered wild words of love and trust ; and the youth, while stung with remorse at his own neglect, was astonished to perceive the poetic forms of beauty in which the soul of the uneducated maiden burst into flower. But as her senses recovered themselves, the face gradually changed to her, as if the slow alteration of two years had been phantasmagorically compressed into a few moments ; and the glow departed from the maiden's thoughts and words, and her soul found itself at the narrow window of the present, from which she could behold but a dreary country. From the street came the iambic cry of the fool, " Come hame, come hame."

Tycho Brahe, I think, is said to have kept a fool, who frequently sat at his feet in his study, and to whose mutterings he used to listen in the pauses of his own thought. The shining soul of the astronomer drew forth the rainbow of harmony from the misty spray of words ascending ever from the dark gulf into which the thoughts of the idiot were ever falling. He beheld curious concurrences of words therein, and could read strange meanings from them—sometimes even received wondrous hints for the direction of celestial inquiry, from what, to any other, and it may be to the fool himself, was but a ceaseless and aimless babble. Such power lieth in words.

It is not then to be wondered at that the sounds I have mentioned should fall on the ears of Elsie, at such a moment, as a message from God Himself. This then—all this dreariness—was but a passing show like the rest, and there lay somewhere for her a reality—a home. The tears burst up from her oppressed heart. She received the message,

and prepared to go home. From that time her strength gradually sank, but her spirits as steadily rose.

The strength of the fool, too, began to fail, for he was old. He bore all the signs of age, even to the grey hairs, which betokened no wisdom. But one cannot say what wisdom might be in him, or how far he had not fought his own battle, and been victorious. Whether any notion of a continuance of life and thought dwelt in his brain, it is impossible to tell ; but he seemed to have the idea that this was not his home ; and those who saw him gradually approaching his end might well anticipate for him a higher life in the world to come.

He had passed through this world without ever awaking to such a consciousness of being as is common to mankind. He had spent his years like a weary dream through a long night,—a strange, dismal, unkindly dream ; and now the morning was at hand. Often in his dream had he listened with sleepy senses to the ringing of the bell, but that bell would awake him at last. He was like a seed buried too deep in the soil, to which the light has never penetrated, and which, therefore, has never forced its way upwards to the open air, never experienced the resurrection of the dead. But seeds will grow ages after they have fallen into the earth ; and indeed with many kinds, and within some limits, the older the seed before it germinates, the more plentiful the fruit. And may it not be believed of many human beings, that, the great Husbandman having sown them like seeds in the soil of human affairs, there they lie buried a life long ; and only after the upturning of the soil by death, reach a position in which the awakening of their aspiration and the consequent growth become possible ? Surely He has made nothing in vain.

A violent cold and cough brought him at last near to his end, and hearing that he was ill, Elsie ventured one bright spring day to go to see him. When she entered the miserable room where he lay, he held out his hand to her with something like a smile, and muttered feebly and painfully, " I'm gaein' to the wow, nae to come back again."

Elsie could not restrain her tears ; while the old man, looking fixedly at her, though with meaningless eyes, muttered, for the last time, "*Come hame ! come hame !*" and sank into a lethargy, from which nothing could rouse him, till, next morning, he was waked by friendly death from the long sleep of this world's night. They bore him to his favourite churchyard, and buried him within the site of the old church, below his loved bell, which had ever been to him as the

cuckoo-note of a coming spring. Thus he at length obeyed its summons, and went home.

Elsie lingered till the first summer days lay warm on the land. Several kind hearts in the village, hearing of her illness, visited her and ministered to her. Wondering at her sweetness and patience, they regretted they had not known her before. How much consolation might not their kindness have imparted, and how much might not their sympathy have strengthened her on her painful road!

But they could not long have delayed her going home. Nor, mentally constituted as she was, would this have been at all to be desired. Indeed it was chiefly the expectation of departure that quieted and soothed her tremulous nature. It is true that a deep spring of hope and faith kept singing on in her heart, but this alone, without the anticipation of speedy release, could only have kept her mind at peace. It could not have reached, at least for a long time, the border land between body and mind, in which her disease lay.

One still night of summer, the nurse who watched by her bedside heard her murmur through her sleep, "I hear it: *come hame—come hame*. I'm comin', I'm comin'—I'm gaein' hame to the wow, nae to come back."

She awoke at the sound of her own words, and begged the nurse to convey to her brother her last request, that she might be buried by the side of the fool, within the old church of Ruthven. Then she turned her face to the wall, and in the morning was found quiet and cold. She must have died within a few minutes after her last words. She was buried according to her request; and thus she too went home.

Side by side rest the aged fool and the young maiden; for the bell called them, and they obeyed; and surely they found the fire burning bright, and heard friendly voices, and felt sweet lips on theirs, in the home to which they went. Surely both intellect and love were waiting them there.

Still the old bell hangs in the old gable; and whenever another is borne to the old churchyard, it keeps calling to those who are left behind, with the same sad, but friendly and unchanging voice—"Come hame! come hame! come hame!"

ANONYMOUS

circa 1882

LE REVENANT

There are but two classes of persons in the world—those who are hanged, and those who are not hanged ; and it has been my lot to belong to the former.

THERE are few men, perhaps, who have not a hundred times in the course of life, felt a curiosity to know what their sensations would be if they were compelled to lay life down. The very impossibility, in all ordinary cases, of obtaining any approach to this knowledge, is an incessant spur pressing on the fancy in its endeavours to arrive at it. Thus poets and painters have ever made the estate of a man condemned to die, one of their favourite themes of comment or description. Footboys and 'prentices hang themselves almost every other day, conclusively—missing their arrangement for slipping the knot half way—out of a seeming instinct to try the secrets of that fate, which—less in jest than earnest—they feel an inward monition may become their own. And thousands of men, in early life, are uneasy until they have mounted a breach, or fought a duel, merely because they wish to know, experimentally, that their nerves are capable of carrying them through that peculiar ordeal. Now *I* am in a situation to speak, from experience, upon that very interesting question—the sensations attendant upon a passage from life to death. I have been HANGED, and am ALIVE—perhaps there are not three other men at this moment in Europe who can make the same declaration.

Before this statement meets the public eye, I shall have quitted England for ever ; therefore I have no advantage to gain from its publication. And for the vanity of knowing, when I shall be a sojourner in a far country, that my name, for good or ill, is talked about in this—such fame would scarcely do even my pride much good, when I dare not lay claim to its identity. But the cause which excites me to write is this—My greatest pleasure through life has been the perusal of any extraordinary narratives of fact. An account of a shipwreck in which hundreds have perished ; of a plague which has depopulated towns or cities ; anecdotes and inquiries connected with the regulation of prisons, hospitals, or lunatic receptacles ! nay, the

very police reports of a common newspaper—as relative to matters of reality—have always excited a degree of interest in my mind which cannot be produced by the best invented tale of fiction. Because I believe therefore that, to persons of a temper like my own, the reading that which I have to relate will afford very high gratification ; and because I know also that what I describe can do mischief to no one, while it may prevent the symptoms and details of a very rare consummation from being lost,—for these reasons I am desirous, as far as a very limited education will permit me, to write a plain history of the strange fortunes and miseries to which, during the last twelve months, I have been subjected.

I have stated already that I have *been* hanged and *am* alive. I can gain nothing now by misrepresentation—I was GUILTY of the act for which I suffered. There are individuals of respectability whom my conduct already has disgraced, and I will not revive their shame and grief by publishing my name. But it stands in the list of capital convictions in the Old Bailey Calendar for the Winter Sessions, 1826 ; and this reference, coupled with a few of the facts which follow, will be sufficient to guide any persons who are doubtful to the proof that my statement is a true one.

In the year 1824 I was a clerk in a Russia broker's house, and fagged between Broad Street Buildings and Batson's Coffee-house and the London Docks, from nine in the morning to six in the evening, for a salary of fifty pounds a year. I did this—not contentedly, but I endured it ; living sparingly in a little lodging at Islington for two years, till I fell in love with a poor but very beautiful girl, who was honest where it was very hard to be honest, and worked twelve hours a day at sewing and millinery in a mercer's shop in Cheapside for half a guinea a week.

To make short of a long tale—this girl did not know how poor I was ; and in about six months I committed seven or eight forgeries to the amount of near two hundred pounds. I was seized one morning—I expected it for weeks, as regularly as I awoke, every morning—and carried, after a few questions, for examination before the Lord Mayor. At the Mansion House I had nothing to plead. Fortunately my motions had not been watched ; and so no one but myself was implicated in the charge—as no one else was really guilty. A sort of instinct, to try the last hope, made me listen to the magistrate's caution, and remain silent ; or else, for any chance of escape I had, I

might as well have confessed the whole truth at once. The examination lasted about half an hour ; when I was fully committed for trial, and sent away to Newgate.

The shock of my first arrest was very slight indeed ; indeed I almost question if it was not a relief, rather than a shock, to me. For months I had known perfectly that my eventual discovery was certain. I tried to shake the thought of this off ; but it was of no use—I dreamed of it even in my sleep ; and I never entered our counting-house of a morning, or saw my master take up the cash-book in the course of the day, that my heart was not up in my mouth, and my hand shook so that I could not hold the pen—for twenty minutes afterwards I was sure to do nothing but blunder. Until at last, when I saw our chief clerk walk into the room, on New Year's morning, with a police officer, I was as ready for what followed as if I had had six hours' conversation about it. I do not believe I showed—for I am sure I did not feel it—either surprise or alarm. My "fortune," however, as the officer called it, was soon told. I was apprehended on the 1st of January ; and the Sessions being then just begun, my time came rapidly round. On the 4th of the same month, the London Grand Jury found three Bills against me for forgery ; and, on the evening of the 5th, the Judge exhorted me to "prepare for death" ; for "there was no hope that in this world mercy could be extended to me."

The whole business of my trial and sentence passed over as coolly and formally as I would have calculated a question of interest or summed up an underwriting account. I had never, though I lived in London, witnessed the proceedings of a Criminal Court before ; and I could hardly believe the composure and indifference—and yet civility, for there was no show of anger or ill-temper—with which I was treated ; together with the apparent perfect insensibility of all the parties round me, while I was rolling on—with a speed which nothing could check, and which increased every moment—to my ruin.

I was called suddenly up from the dock, when my turn for trial came, and placed at the bar ; and the Judge asked in a tone which had neither severity about it nor compassion, nor carelessness nor anxiety, nor any character or expression whatever that could be distinguished—"If there was any counsel appeared for the prosecution ?" A barrister then, who seemed to have some consideration—a middle-aged gentlemanly-looking man—stated the case against me, as he said he would do, very "fairly and forbearingly" ; but as soon as he

read the facts from his brief, that only, I heard an officer of the gaol, who stood behind me, say—"Put the rope about my neck."

My master then was called to give his evidence, which he did very temperately—but it was conclusive ; a young gentleman, who was my counsel, asked a few questions in cross-examination, after he had carefully looked over the indictment ; but there was nothing to cross-examine upon—I knew that well enough—though I was thankful for the interest he seemed to take in my case.

The Judge then told me, I thought more gravely than he had spoken before, "That it was time for me to speak in my defence, if I had anything to say." I had nothing to say. I thought one moment to drop down upon my knees and beg for mercy ; but, again, I thought it would only make me look ridiculous ; and I only answered, as well as I could, "That I would not trouble the Court with any defence." Upon this, the Judge turned round, with a more serious air still, to the Jury, who stood up all to listen to him as he spoke. And I listened too, or tried to listen attentively, as hard as I could ; and yet with all I could do I could not keep my thoughts from wandering !

For the sight of the Court—all so soberly, and regular, and composed, and formal, and well satisfied, spectators and all, while I was running on with the speed of wheels upon smooth soil downhill, to destruction—seemed as if the whole trial were a dream, and not a thing in earnest ! The barristers sat round the table, silent, but utterly unconcerned, and two were looking over their briefs, and another was reading a newspaper ; and the spectators in the galleries looked on and listened as pleasantly as though it were a matter not of death going on but of pastime or amusement ; and one very fat man, who seemed to be the clerk of the Court, stopped his writing when the Judge began, but leaned back in his chair with his hands in his breeches' pockets, except once or twice that he took a snuff ; and not one living soul seemed to take notice—they did not seem to know the fact that there was a poor, desperate, helpless creature, whose days were fast running out, whose hours of life were even with the last grains in the bottom of the sand-glass, among them !

I lost the whole of the Judge's charge, thinking of I know not what, in a sort of dream ; unable to steady my mind to anything, and only biting the stalk of a piece of rosemary that lay by me. But I heard the low, distinct whisper of the Foreman of the Jury as he

brought in the verdict—"GUILTY,"—and the last words of the Judge saying, "that I should be hanged by the neck until I was dead": and bidding me "prepare myself for the next life, for that my crime was one that admitted of no mercy in this." The gaoler then, who had stood close by me all the while, put his hand quickly upon my shoulder, in an under voice telling me to "Come along!"

Going down the hall steps, two other officers met me; and, placing me between them, without saying a word, hurried me across the yard in the direction back to the prison. As the door of the court closed behind us, I saw the Judge fold up his papers, and the Jury being sworn in the next case. Two other culprits were brought up out of the dock; and the crier called out for "The prosecutor and witnesses against James Hawkins and Joseph Sanderson, for burglary!"

I had no friends, if any in such a case could have been of use to me—no relatives but two; by whom—I could not complain of them—I was at once disowned. On the day after my trial my master came to me in person and told me that "he had recommended me to mercy, and should try to obtain a mitigation of my sentence." I don't think I seemed very grateful for this assurance—I thought that if he had wished to spare my life he might have made sure by not appearing against me. I thanked him; but the colour was in my face, and the worst feelings that ever rose in my heart in all my life were at this visit. I thought he was not a wise man to come into my cell at that time—though he did not come alone. But the thing went no farther.

There was but one person then in all the world that seemed to belong to me; and that one was Elizabeth Clare! And when I thought of her, the idea of all that was to happen to myself was forgotten—I covered my face with my hands, and cast myself on the ground; and I wept, for I was in desperation. While I was being examined, and my desk searched for papers at home, before I was carried to the Mansion House, I had got an opportunity to send one word to her—"That if she wished me only to try for my life, she should not come, nor send, nor be known in any way in my misfortune." But my scheme was to no purpose. She had gone wild as soon as she had heard the news of my apprehension—never thought of herself, but confessed her acquaintance with me. The result was, she was dismissed from her employment—and it was her only means of livelihood.

She had been everywhere—to my master, to the judge that tried

me, to the magistrates, to the sheriffs, to the aldermen ; she had made her way even to the Secretary of State ! My heart did misgive me at the thought of death ; but, in despite of myself, I forgot fear when I missed her usual time of coming, and gathered from the people about me how she was employed. I had no thought about the success or failure of her attempt. All my thoughts were,—that she was a young girl, and beautiful—hardly in her senses, and quite unprotected—without money to help or a friend to advise her—pleading to strangers—humbling herself perhaps to menials, who would think her very despair and helpless condition a challenge to infamy and insult. Well, it mattered little ! The thing was no worse because I was alive to see and suffer from it. Two days more and all would be over ; the demons that fed on human wretchedness would have their prey. She would be homeless, penniless, friendless—she should have been the companion of a forger and a felon ; it needed no witchcraft to guess the termination.

We hear curiously, and read every day, of the visits of friends and relatives to wretched criminals condemned to die. Those who read and hear of these things the most curiously have little impression of the sadness of the reality. It was six days after my first apprehension when Elizabeth Clare came, for the last time, to visit me in prison ! In only these short six days her beauty, health, strength—all were gone ; years upon years of toil and sickness could not have left a more worn-out wreck. Death, as plainly as ever death spoke, sat in her countenance—she was broken-hearted.

When she came, I had not seen her for two days. I could not speak, and there was an officer of the prison with us too—I was the property of the law now ; and my mother, if she had lived, could not have blest, or wept for me, without a third person, and that a stranger, being present. I sat down by her on my bedstead, which was the only place to sit on in my cell, and wrapped her shawl close round her, for it was very cold weather, and I was allowed no fire ; and we sat so for almost an hour without exchanging a word. She had no good news to bring me—I knew that ; all I wanted to hear was about herself—I did hear ! She had not a help, nor a hope, nor a prop left upon the earth ! The only creature that sheltered her—the only relative she had—was a married sister, whose husband I knew to be a villain. What would she do—what could she attempt ! She “ did not know that ” ; and “ it was not long that she should be a trouble to anybody.” But “ she

should go to Lord S—— again that evening about me. He had treated her kindly ; and she felt certain she should still succeed. It was her fault—she had told everybody this—all that had happened ; if it had not been for meeting her, I should never have gone into debt and into extravagance.” I listened—and I could only listen ! I would have died—coward as I was—upon the rack, or in the fire, so I could but have left her safe. I did not ask so much as to leave her happy ! Oh then I did think, in bitterness of spirit, if I had but shunned temptation, and stayed poor and honest ! If I could only have placed her once more in the hard laborious poverty where I had first found her ! It was my work, and she never could be there again !

How long this vain remorse might have lasted, I cannot tell. My head was light and giddy. I understood the glance of the turnkey, who was watching me—“ That Elizabeth must be got away ” ; but I had not strength even to attempt it. The thing had been arranged for me. The master of the gaol entered. She went—it was then the afternoon ; and she was got away on the pretence that she might make one more effort to save me, with a promise that she should return again at night. The master was an elderly man who had daughters of his own ; and he promised—for he saw I knew how the matter was—to see Elizabeth safe through the crowd of wretches among whom she must pass to quit the prison.

She went, and I knew that she was going for ever. As she turned back to speak as the door was closing, I knew that I had seen her for the last time. The door of my cell closed. We were to meet no more on earth. I fell upon my knees—I clasped my hands—my tears burst out afresh—and I called on God to bless her.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Elizabeth left me ; and when she departed it seemed as if my business in this world was at an end. I could have wished, then and there, to have died upon the spot ; I had done my last act and drunk my last draught in life. But as the twilight drew in, my cell was cold and damp ; and the evening was dark and gloomy ; and I had no fire, nor any candle, although it was in the month of January, nor much covering to warm me ; and by degrees my spirits weakened, and my heart sank at the desolate wretchedness of everything about me ; and gradually—for what I write now shall be the truth—the thoughts of Elizabeth, and what would be her fate, began to give way before a sense of my own situation.

This was the first time—I cannot tell the reason why—that my

mind had ever fixed itself fully upon the trial that I had within a few hours to go through ; and, as I reflected on it, a terror spread over me almost in an instant, as though it were that my sentence was just pronounced, and that I had not known, really and seriously, that I was to die, before. I had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. There was food which a religious gentleman who visited me had sent from his own table, but I could not taste it ; and when I looked at it, strange fancies came over me. It was dainty food—not such as was served to the prisoners in the gaol. It was sent to me because I was to die to-morrow ! and I thought of the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, that were pampered for slaughter. I felt that my own sensations were not as they ought to be at this time ; and I believe that for a while I was insane. A sort of dull humming noise that I could not get rid of, like the buzzing of bees, sounded in my ears. And though it was dark, sparks of light seemed to dance before my eyes ; and I could recollect nothing.

I tried to say my prayers, but could only remember a word here and there ; and then it seemed to me as if these were blasphemies that I was uttering ;—I don't know what they were—I cannot tell what it was I said ; and then, on a sudden, I felt as though all this terror was useless, and that I would not stay there to die ; and I jumped up and wrenched at the bars of my cell window with a force that bent them—for I felt as if I had the strength of a lion. And I felt all over the lock of my door ; and tried the door itself with my shoulder—though I knew it was plated with iron, and heavier than that of a church ; and I groped about the very walls, and into the corners of my dungeon—though I knew very well, if I had had my senses, that it was all of solid stone three feet thick ; and that, if I could have passed through a crevice smaller than the eye of a needle, I had no chance of escaping. And, in the midst of all this exertion, a faintness came over me as though I had swallowed poison ; and I had just power to reel to the bed-place, where I sank down, as I think, in a swoon : but this did not last,—for my head swam round, and the cell seemed to turn with me ; and I dreamed—between sleeping and waking—that it was midnight, and that Elizabeth had come back as she had promised, and that they refused to admit her. And I thought that it snowed heavily, and that the streets were all covered with it, as if with a white sheet, and that I saw her dead—lying in the fallen snow—and in the darkness—at the prison gate.

When I came to myself, I was struggling and breathless. In a minute or two I heard St. Sepulchre's clock go ten ; and I knew it was a dream that I had had : but I could not help fancying that Elizabeth really had come back. And I knocked loudly at the door of my cell ; and when one of the turnkeys came, I begged of him, for mercy's sake, to go down to the gate and see ; and moreover, to take a small bundle, containing two shirts—which I pushed to him through the grate—for I had no money ; and—if he would have my blessing—to bring me but one small cup of brandy to keep my heart alive ; for I felt that I had not the strength of a man, and should never be able to go through my trial like one. The turnkey shook his head at my request as he went away ; and said that he had not the brandy, even if he dared run the risk to give it me. But in a few minutes he returned, bringing me a glass of wine, which he said the master of the gaol had sent me, and hoped it would do me good,—however he would take nothing for it.

And the chaplain of the prison, too, came, without my sending ; and—for which I shall ever have cause to thank him—went himself down to the outer gates of the gaol, and pledged his honour as a man and a Christian clergyman that Elizabeth was not there, nor had returned ; and moreover he assured me that it was not likely she would come back, for her friends had been told privately that she could not be admitted ; but nevertheless he should himself be up during the whole night ; and if she should come, although she could not be allowed to see me, he would take care that she should have kind treatment and protection ; and I had reason afterwards to know that he kept his word. He then exhorted me solemnly “ to think no more of cares or troubles in this world, but to bend my thoughts upon that to come, and to try to reconcile my soul to Heaven ; trusting that my sins, though they were heavy, under repentance, might have hope of mercy.”

When he was gone, I did find myself for a little while more collected ; and I sat down again on the bed, and tried seriously to commune with myself, and prepare myself for my fate. I recalled to my mind that I had but a few hours more at all events to live—that there was no hope on earth of escaping—and that it was at least better that I should die decently and like a man. Then I tried to recollect all the tales that I had ever heard about death by hanging—that it was said to be the sensation of a moment—to give no pain—to cause the extinction of life instantaneously—and so on, to twenty other strange ideas.

By degrees my head began to wander and grow unmanageable again.

I put my hands tightly to my throat, as though to try the sensation of strangling. Then I felt my arms at the places where the cords would be tied. I went through the fastening of the rope—the tying of the hands together : the thing that I felt most averse to was the having the white cap muffled over my eyes and face. If I could avoid that, the rest was not so very horrible ! In the midst of these fancies a numbness seemed to creep over my senses. The giddiness that I had felt gave way to a dull stupor, which lessened the pain that my thoughts gave me, though I still went on thinking. The church clock rang midnight : I was sensible of the sound, but it reached me indistinctly—as though coming through many closed doors, or from a far distance. By and by I saw the objects before my mind less and less clearly—then only partially—then they were gone altogether. I fell asleep.

I slept until the hour of execution. It was seven o'clock on the next morning, when a knocking at the door of my cell awoke me. I heard the sound, as though in my dreams, for some moments before I was fully awake ; and my first sensation was only the dislike which a weary man feels at being roused : I was tired and wished to doze on. In a minute after, the bolts on the outside my dungeon were drawn ; a turnkey, carrying a small lamp, and followed by the master of the gaol and the chaplain, entered : I looked up—a shudder like the shock of electricity—like a plunge into a bath of ice—ran through me—one glance was sufficient. Sleep was gone as though I had never slept—even as I never was to sleep again—I was conscious of my situation ! “ R——,” said the master to me, in a subdued but steady tone, “ it is time for you to rise.”

The chaplain asked me how I had passed the night, and proposed that we should join in prayer. I gathered myself up, and remained seated on the side of the bed-place. My teeth chattered, and my knees knocked together in despite of myself. It was barely daylight yet ; and, as the cell door stood open, I could see into the small paved court beyond : the morning was thick and gloomy ; and a slow but settled rain was coming down. “ It is half-past seven o'clock, R—— ! ” said the master. I just mustered an entreaty to be left alone till the last moment. I had thirty minutes to live.

I tried to make another observation when the master was leaving the cell ; but this time I could not get the words out : my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth, and my speech seemed gone. I made

two desperate efforts, but it would not do—I could not utter. When they left me I never stirred from my place on the bed. I was benumbed with the cold, probably from the sleep, and the unaccustomed exposure ; and I sat crouched together, as it were, to keep myself warmer, with my arms folded across my breast and my head hanging down, shivering : and my body felt as if it were such a weight to me that I was unable to move it or stir. The day now was breaking, yellow—and heavily ; and the light stole by degrees into my dungeon, showing me the damp stone walls and desolate dark paved floor ; and, strange as it was, with all that I could do, I could not keep myself from noticing these trifling things—though perdition was coming upon me the very next moment. I noticed the lamp which the turnkey had left on the floor, and which was burning dimly, with a long wick, being clogged with the chill and bad air, and I thought to myself—even at that moment—that it had not been trimmed since the night before. And I looked at the bare naked iron bed-frame that I sat on ; and at the heavy studs on the door of the dungeon ; and at the scrawls and writing upon the wall that had been drawn by former prisoners ; and I put my hand to try my own pulse, and it was so low that I could hardly count it : I could not feel—though I tried to make myself feel it—that I was going to DIE.

In the midst of this, I heard the chimes of the chapel clock begin to strike ; and I thought—Lord take pity on me, a wretch !—it could not be the three quarters after seven yet ! The clock went over the three quarters—it chimed the fourth quarter, and struck eight. They were in my cell before I perceived them. They found me in the place and in the posture as they had left me.

What I have farther to tell will lie in a very small compass : my recollections are very minute up to this point, but not at all so close as to what occurred afterwards. I scarcely recollect very clearly how I got from my cell to the press-room. I think two little withered men, dressed in black, supported me. I know I tried to rise when I saw the master and his people come into my dungeon, but I could not.

In the press-room were the two miserable wretches that were to suffer with me ; they were bound with their arms behind them, and their hands together ; and were lying upon a bench hard by, until I was ready. A meagre-looking old man, with thin white hair, who was reading to one of them, came up, and said something —“ That we ought to embrace,”—I did not distinctly hear what it was.

The great difficulty that I had was to keep from falling. I had thought that these moments would have been all of fury and horror, but I felt nothing of this ; but only a weakness, as though my heart—and the very floor on which I stood—was sinking under me. I could just make a motion, that the old white-haired man should leave me ; and some one interfered and sent him away. The pinioning of my hands and arms was then finished ; and I heard an officer whisper to the chaplain that “ all was ready.” As we passed out, one of the men in black held a glass of water to my lips ; but I could not swallow : and Mr. W——, the master of the gaol, who had bid farewell to my companions, offered me his hand. The blood rushed into my face once more for one moment ! It was too much—the man who was sending me to execution, to offer to shake me by the hand !

This was the last moment—but one—of full perception that I had in life. I remember our beginning to move forward through the long arched passages which led from the press-room to the scaffold. I saw the lamps that were still burning, for the daylight never entered here : I heard the quick tolling of the bell, and the deep voice of the chaplain reading as he walked before us :—“ I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord ; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, shall live. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God ! ”

It was the funeral service—the order for the grave—the office for those that were senseless and dead—over us, the quick and the living.

I felt once more—and saw !—I felt the transition from these dim, close, hot, lamp-lighted subterranean passages, to the open platform and steps at the foot of the scaffold, and to day. I saw the immense crowd blackening the whole area of the street below me. The windows of the shops and houses opposite, to the fourth storey, choked with gazers. I saw St. Sepulchre's church through the yellow fog in the distance, and heard the pealing of its bell. I recollect the cloudy, misty morning ; the wet that lay upon the scaffold—the huge dark mass of building, the prison itself, that rose beside, and seemed to cast a shadow over us—the cold, fresh breeze, that, as I emerged from it, broke upon my face. I see it all now—the whole horrible landscape is before me. The scaffold—the rain—the faces of the multitude—the people clinging to the house-tops—the smoke that beat heavily downwards from the chimneys—the waggons filled with women staring

in the inn yards opposite—the hoarse low roar that ran through the gathered crowd as we appeared. I never saw so many objects at once, so plainly and distinctly, in all my life, as at that one glance ; but it lasted only for an instant.

From that look, and from that instant, all that followed is a blank. Of the prayers of the chaplain ; of the fastening the fatal noose ; of the putting on of the cap which I had so much disliked ; of my actual *execution* and *death*, I have not the slightest atom of recollection. But that I know such occurrences must have taken place, I should not have the smallest consciousness that they ever did so. I read in the daily newspapers an account of my behaviour at the scaffold—that I conducted myself decently but with firmness ; of my death—that I seemed to die almost without a struggle. Of any of these events I have not been able by any exertion to recall the most distant remembrance. With the first view of the scaffold all my recollection ceases. The next circumstance which—to my perception—seems to follow, is the having awoke, as if from sleep, and found myself in a bed in a handsome chamber, with a gentleman—as I first opened my eyes—looking attentively at me. I had my senses perfectly, though I did not speak at once. I thought directly that I had been reprieved at the scaffold, and had fainted. After I knew the truth, I thought that I had an imperfect recollection of having found, or fancied myself—as in a dream—in some strange place lying naked, and with a mass of figures floating about before me : but this idea certainly never presented itself to me until I was informed of the fact that it had occurred.

The accident to which I owe my existence will have been divined ! My condition is a strange one ! I am a living man ; and I possess certificates both of my death and burial. I know that a coffin filled with stones, and with my name upon the plate, lies buried in the churchyard of St. Andrew's, Holborn : I saw from a window the undressed hearse arrive that carried it ; I was a witness to my own funeral : these are strange things to see. My dangers, however, and, I trust, my crimes, are over for ever. Thanks to the bounty of the excellent individual, whose benevolence has recognised the service which he did me for a claim upon him, I am married to the woman whose happiness and safety proved my last thought—so long as reason remained with me—in dying. And I am about to sail upon a far voyage, which is only a sorrowful one that it parts me for ever from my benefactor. The fancy that this poor narrative—from the singularity of the facts it

relates—may be interesting to some people, has induced me to write it, perhaps at too much length ; but it is not easy for those who write without skill to write briefly. Should it meet the eye of the few relatives I have, it will tell one of them that to his jealousy of being known in connection with me—even *after death*—I owe my *life*. Should my old master read it, perhaps by this time he may have thought I suffered severely for yielding to a first temptation ; at least while I bear him no ill-will, I will not believe that he will learn my deliverance with regret. For the words are soon spoken, and the act is soon done which dooms a wretched creature to an untimely death ; but bitter are the pangs—and the sufferings of the body are among the least of them—that he must go through before he arrives at it !

ANONYMOUS

circa 1882

THE IRON SHROUD

THE castle of the Prince of Tolfi was built on the summit of the towering and precipitous rock of Scylla, and commanded a magnificent view of Sicily in all its grandeur. Here during the wars of the Middle Ages, when the fertile plains of Italy were devastated by hostile factions, those prisoners were confined for whose ransom a costly price was demanded. Here, too, in a dungeon, excavated deep in the solid rock, the miserable victim was immured, whom revenge pursued—the dark, fierce, and unpitying revenge of an Italian heart.

Vivenzio—the noble and the generous, the fearless in battle, and the pride of Naples in her sunny hours of peace—the young, the brave, the proud Vivenzio fell beneath this subtle and remorseless spirit. He was the prisoner of Tolfi, and he languished in that rock-encircled dungeon, which stood alone, and whose portals never opened twice upon a living captive.

It had the semblance of a vast cage, for the roof and floor and sides were of iron, solidly wrought and spaciouly constructed. High above there ran a range of seven grated windows, guarded with massy bars of the same metal, which admitted light and air. Save these, and the tall folding doors beneath them, which occupied the centre, no chink, or chasm, or projection, broke the smooth black surface of the walls. An iron bedstead, littered with straw, stood in one corner ; and beside it a vessel with water and a coarse dish filled with coarser food.

Even the intrepid soul of Vivenzio shrank with dismay as he entered this abode, and heard the ponderous doors triple-locked by the silent ruffians who conducted him to it. Their silence seemed prophetic of his fate, of the living grave that had been prepared for him. His menaces and his entreaties, his indignant appeals for justice, and his impatient questioning of their intentions, were alike vain. They listened, but spoke not. Fit ministers of a crime that should have no tongue !

How dismal was the sound of their retiring steps ! And, as their

faint echoes died along the winding passages, a fearful presage grew within him, that never more the face, or voice, or tread of man would greet his senses. He had seen human beings for the last time ! And he had looked his last upon the bright sky, and upon the smiling earth, and upon a beautiful world he loved, and whose minion he had been ! Here he was to end his life—a life he had just begun to revel in. And by what means ? By secret poison ? or by murderous assault ? No—for then it had been needless to bring him thither. Famine perhaps—a thousand deaths in one ! It was terrible to think of it—but it was yet more terrible to picture long, long years of captivity in a solitude so appalling, a loneliness so dreary, that thought, for want of fellowship, would lose itself in madness or stagnate into idiocy.

He could not hope to escape, unless he had the power, with his bare hands, of rending asunder the solid iron walls of his prison. He could not hope for liberty from the relenting mercies of his enemy. His instant death, under any form of refined cruelty, was not the object of Tolfi, for he might have inflicted it, and he had not. It was too evident, therefore, he was reserved for some premeditated scheme of subtle vengeance ; and what vengeance could transcend in fiendish malice either the slow death of famine or the still slower one of solitary incarceration, till the last lingering spark of life expired, or till reason fled, and nothing should remain to perish but the brute functions of the body ?

It was evening when Vivenzio entered his dungeon, and the approaching shades of night wrapped it in total darkness, as he paced up and down, revolving in his mind these horrible forebodings. No tolling bell from the castle or from any neighbouring church or convent struck upon his ear to tell how the hours passed. Frequently he would stop and listen for some sound that might betoken the vicinity of man ; but the solitude of the desert, the silence of the tomb are not so still and deep as the oppressive desolation by which he was encompassed. His heart sank within him, and he threw himself dejectedly upon his couch of straw. Here sleep gradually obliterated the consciousness of misery, and bland dreams wafted his delighted spirit to scenes which were once glowing realities for him, in whose ravishing illusions he soon lost the remembrance that he was Tolfi's prisoner.

When he awoke it was daylight ; but how long he had slept he knew not. It might be early morning or it might be sultry noon, for

he could measure time by no other note of its progress than light and darkness. He had been so happy in his sleep, amid friends who loved him, and the sweeter endearments of those who loved him as friends could not, that in the first moments of waking his startled mind seemed to admit the knowledge of his situation, as if it had burst upon it for the first time, fresh in all its appalling horrors. He gazed round with an air of doubt and amazement, and took up a handful of the straw upon which he lay, as though he would ask himself what it meant. But memory, too faithful to her office, soon unveiled the melancholy past, while reason, shuddering at the task, flashed before his eyes the tremendous future. The contrast overpowered him. He remained for some time lamenting, like a truth, the bright visions that had vanished ; and recoiling from the present, which clung to him as a poisoned garment.

When he grew more calm, he surveyed his gloomy dungeon. Alas ! the stronger light of day only served to confirm what the gloomy indistinctness of the preceding evening had partially disclosed, the utter impossibility of escape. As, however, his eyes wandered round and round, and from place to place, he noticed two circumstances which excited his surprise and curiosity. The one, he thought, might be fancy ; but the other was positive. His pitcher of water and the dish which contained his food had been removed from his side while he slept, and now stood near the door.

Were he even inclined to doubt this, by supposing he had mistaken the spot where he saw them over night, he could not, for the pitcher now in his dungeon was neither of the same form nor colour as the other, while the food was changed for some other of better quality. He had been visited therefore during the night. But how had the person obtained entrance ? Could he have slept so soundly that the unlocking and opening of those ponderous portals were effected without waking him ? He would have said this was not possible, but that in doing so he must admit a greater difficulty, an entrance by other means, of which he was convinced there existed none. It was not intended, then, that he should be left to perish from hunger. But the secret and mysterious mode of supplying him with food seemed to indicate he was to have no opportunity of communicating with a human being.

The other circumstance which had attracted his notice was the disappearance, as he believed, of one of the seven grated windows that ran along the top of his prison. He felt confident that he had observed and counted them ; for he was rather surprised at their number, and

there was something peculiar in their form, as well as in the manner of their arrangement, at unequal distances. It was so much easier, however, to suppose he was mistaken, than that a portion of the solid iron which formed the walls could have escaped from its position, that he soon dismissed the thought from his mind.

Vivenzio partook of the food that was before him without apprehension. It might be poisoned ; but if it were, he knew he could not escape death should such be the design of Tolfi ; and the quickest death would be the speediest release.

The day passed wearily and gloomily, though not without a faint hope that by keeping watch at night he might observe when the person came again to bring him food, which he supposed he would do in the same way as before. The mere thought of being approached by a living creature, and the opportunity it might present of learning the doom prepared, or preparing, for him, imparted some comfort. Besides, if he came alone, might he not in a furious onset overpower him ? Or he might be accessible to pity, or the influence of such munificent rewards as he could bestow, if once more at liberty and master of himself. Say he were armed. The worst that could befall, if nor bribe, nor prayers, nor force prevailed, was a faithful blow which, though dealt in a damned cause, might work a desired end. There was no chance so desperate, but it looked lovely in Vivenzio's eyes compared with the idea of being totally abandoned.

The night came, and Vivenzio watched. Morning came, and Vivenzio was confounded ! He must have slumbered without knowing it. Sleep must have stolen over him when exhausted by fatigue, and in that interval of feverish repose he had been baffled ; for there stood his replenished pitcher of water, and there his day's meal !

Nor was this all. Casting his looks towards the windows of his dungeon, he counted but FIVE ! Here was no deception ; and he was now convinced there had been none the day before. But what did all this portend ? Into what strange and mysterious den had he been cast ? He gazed till his eyes ached ; he could discover nothing to explain the mystery. That it was so, he knew. Why it was so, he racked his imagination in vain to conjecture. He examined the doors. A single circumstance convinced him they had not been opened.

A wisp of straw which he had carelessly thrown against them the preceding day, as he paced to and fro, remained where he had cast it, though it must have been displaced by the slightest motion of either

of the doors. This was evidence that could not be disputed ; and it followed there must be some secret machinery in the walls by which a person could enter. He inspected them closely. They appeared to him one solid and compact mass of iron ; or joined, if joined they were, with such nice art that no mark of division was perceptible. Again and again he surveyed them—and the floor—and the roof—and that range of visionary windows, as he was now almost tempted to consider them : he could discover nothing, absolutely nothing, to relieve his doubts or satisfy his curiosity. Sometimes he fancied that altogether the dungeon had a more contracted appearance—that it looked smaller ; but this he ascribed to fancy, and the impression naturally produced upon his mind by the undeniable disappearance of two of the windows.

With intense anxiety, Vivenzio looked forward to the return of night ; and as it approached he resolved that no treacherous sleep should again betray him. Instead of seeking his bed of straw, he continued to walk up and down his dungeon till daylight, straining his eyes in every direction through the darkness to watch for any appearances that might explain these mysteries. While thus engaged, and as nearly as he could judge (by the time that afterwards elapsed before the morning came in) about two o'clock, there was a slight tremulous motion of the floor.

He stooped. The motion lasted nearly a minute ; but it was so extremely gentle that he almost doubted whether it was real or only imaginary.

He listened. Not a sound could be heard. Presently, however, he felt a rush of cold air blow upon him ; and dashing towards the quarter whence it seemed to proceed, he stumbled over something which he judged to be the water ewer. The rush of cold air was no longer perceptible ; and as Vivenzio stretched out his hands he found himself close to the walls. He remained motionless for a considerable time, but nothing occurred during the remainder of the night to excite his attention, though he continued to watch with unabated vigilance.

The first approaches of the morning were visible through the grated windows, breaking, with faint divisions of light, the darkness that still pervaded every other part, long before Vivenzio was enabled to distinguish any object in his dungeon. Instinctively and fearfully he turned his eyes, hot and inflamed with watching, towards them.

There were FOUR ! He could see only four ; but it might be that some intervening object prevented the fifth from becoming perceptible ; and he waited impatiently to ascertain if it were so. As the light strengthened, however, and penetrated every corner of the cell, other objects of amazement struck his sight. On the ground lay the broken fragments of the pitcher he had used the day before, and at a small distance from them, nearer to the wall, stood the one he had noticed the first night. It was filled with water, and beside it was his food.

He was now certain that by some mechanical contrivance an opening was obtained through the iron wall, and that through this opening the current of air had found entrance. But how noiseless ! For had a feather almost waved at the time, he must have heard it. Again he examined that part of the wall ; but both to sight and touch it appeared one even and uniform surface, while to repeated and violent blows there was no reverberating sound indicative of hollowness.

This perplexing mystery had for a time withdrawn his thoughts from the windows ; but now, directing his eyes again towards them, he saw that the fifth had disappeared in the same manner as the preceding two, without the least distinguishable alteration of external appearances. The remaining four looked as the seven had originally looked ; that is, occupying at irregular distances the top of the wall on that side of the dungeon. The tall folding door, too, still seemed to stand beneath, in the centre of these four, as it had at first stood in the centre of the seven. But he could no longer doubt what on the preceding day he fancied might be the effect of visual deception.

The dungeon was smaller. The roof had lowered, and the opposite ends had contracted the intermediate distance by a space equal, he thought, to that over which the three windows had extended. He was bewildered in vain imaginings to account for these things. Some frightful purpose—some devilish torture of mind or body—some unheard-of device for producing exquisite misery, lurked, he was sure, in what had taken place.

Oppressed with this belief, and distracted more by the dreadful uncertainty of whatever fate impended, than he could be dismayed, he thought, by the knowledge of the worst, he sat ruminating, hour after hour, yielding his fears in succession to every haggard fancy. At last a horrible suspicion flashed suddenly across his mind, and he started up with a frantic air.

"Yes!" he exclaimed, looking wildly round his dungeon, and shuddering as he spoke—"Yes! it must be so! I see it!—I feel the maddening truth like scorching flames upon my brain! Eternal God!—support me! It must be so! Yes, yes, that is to be my fate! Yon roof will descend!—these walls will hem me round—and slowly, slowly, crush me in their iron arms! Lord God! look down upon me, and in mercy strike me with instant death! Oh, fiend—oh, devil—is this your revenge?"

He dashed himself upon the ground in agony; tears burst from him, and the sweat stood in large drops upon his face; he sobbed aloud; he tore his hair; he rolled about like one suffering intolerable anguish of body, and would have bitten the iron floor beneath him; he breathed fearful curses upon Tolfi, and the next moment passionate prayers to heaven for immediate death. Then the violence of his grief became exhausted, and he lay still, weeping as a child would weep.

The twilight of departing day shed its gloom around him ere he arose from that posture of utter and hopeless sorrow. He had taken no food. Not one drop of water had cooled the fever of his parched lips. Sleep had not visited his eyes for six-and-thirty hours. He was faint with hunger, weary with watching and with the excess of his emotions. He tasted of his food; he drank with avidity of the water; and reeling like a drunken man to his straw, cast himself upon it to brood again over the appalling image that had fastened itself upon his almost frenzied thoughts.

He slept. But his slumbers were not tranquil. He resisted, as long as he could, their approach; and when, at last, enfeebled nature yielded to their influence, he found no oblivion from his cares. Terrible dreams haunted him—ghastly visions harrowed up his imagination—he shouted and screamed, as if he already felt the dungeon's ponderous roof descending on him—he breathed hard and thick, as though writhing between its iron walls. Then would he spring up—stare wildly about him—stretch forth his hands to be sure he yet had space enough to live—and, muttering some incoherent words, sink down again, to pass through the same fierce vicissitudes of delirious sleep.

The morning of the fourth day dawned upon Vivenzio. But it was high noon before his mind shook off its stupor, or he awoke to a full consciousness of his situation. And what a fixed energy of despair sat upon his pale features, as he cast his eyes upwards, and gazed upon

the THREE windows that now alone remained ! The three !—there were no more !—and they seemed to number his own allotted days. Slowly and calmly he next surveyed the top and sides, and comprehended all the meaning of the diminished height of the former, as well as of the gradual approximation of the latter.

The contracted dimensions of his mysterious prison were now too gross and palpable to be the juggle of his heated imagination. Still lost in wonder at the means, Vivenzio could put no cheat upon his reason as to the end. By what horrible ingenuity it was contrived that walls, and roof, and windows, should thus silently and imperceptibly, without noise, and without motion almost, fold, as it were, within each other, he knew not. He only knew they did so ; and he vainly strove to persuade himself it was the intention of the contriver to rack the miserable wretch who might be immured there with anticipation, merely, of a fate from which in the very crisis of his agony he was to be reprieved.

Gladly would he have clung even to this possibility if his heart would have let him ; but he felt a dreadful assurance of its fallacy. And what matchless inhumanity it was to doom the sufferer to such lingering torments—to lead him day by day to so appalling a death, unsupported by the consolations of religion, unvisited by any human being, abandoned to himself, deserted of all, and denied even the sad privilege of knowing that his cruel destiny would awaken pity ! Alone he was to perish !—alone he was to wait a slow coming torture, whose most exquisite pangs would be inflicted by that very solitude and that tardy coming !

“It is not death I fear,” he exclaimed, “ but the death I must prepare for ! Methinks, too, I could meet even that—all horrible and revolting as it is—if it might overtake me now. But where shall I find fortitude to tarry till it come ! How can I outlive the three long days and nights I have to live ? There is no power within me to bid the hideous spectre hence—none to make it familiar to my thoughts, or myself patient to its errand. My thoughts, rather, will flee from me, and I grow mad in looking at it. Oh ! for a deep sleep to fall upon me ! That so, in death’s likeness, I might embrace death itself, and drink no more of the cup that is presented to me than my fainting spirit has already tasted ! ”

In the midst of these lamentations Vivenzio noticed that his accustomed meal, with the pitcher of water, had been conveyed, as before,

into his dungeon. But this circumstance no longer excited his surprise. His mind was overwhelmed with others of a far greater magnitude. It suggested, however, a feeble hope of deliverance ; and there is no hope so feeble as not to yield some support to a heart bending under despair.

He resolved to watch during the ensuing night for the signs he had before observed ; and, should he again feel the gentle, tremulous motion of the floor or the current of air, to seize that moment for giving audible expression to his misery. Some person must be near him and within reach of his voice at the instant when his food was supplied ; some one, perhaps, susceptible of pity. Or if not, to be told even that his apprehensions were just, and that his fate was to be what he foreboded, would be preferable to a suspense which hung upon the possibility of his worst fears being visionary.

The night came ; and as the hour approached when Vivenzio imagined he might expect the signs, he stood fixed and silent as a statue. He feared to breathe, almost, lest he might lose any sound which would warn him of their coming. While thus listening, with every faculty of mind and body strained to an agony of attention, it occurred to him he should be more sensible of the motion, probably, if he stretched himself along the iron floor.

He accordingly laid himself softly down, and had not been long in that position when—yes—he was certain of it—the floor moved under him ! He sprang up, and in a voice suffocated nearly with emotion, called aloud. He paused—the motion ceased—he felt no stream of air—all was hushed—no voice answered to his—he burst into tears ; and as he sank to the ground, in renewed anguish, exclaimed : “ Oh, my God ! my God ! You alone have power to save me now, or strengthen me for the trial you permit.”

Another morning dawned upon the wretched captive, and the fatal index of his doom met his eyes. Two windows !—and *two* days—and all would be over ! Fresh food—fresh water ! The mysterious visit had been paid, though he had implored it in vain. But how awfully was his prayer answered in what he now saw ! The roof of the dungeon was within a foot of his head. The two ends were so near, that in six paces he trod the space between them. Vivenzio shuddered as he gazed, and as his steps traversed the narrowed area.

But his feelings no longer vented themselves in frantic wailings. With folded arms, and clenched teeth, with eyes that were bloodshot

from much watching, and fixed with a vacant glare upon the ground, with a hard quick breathing, and a hurried walk, he strode backwards and forwards in silent musing for several hours. What mind shall conceive, what tongue utter, or what pen describe the dark and terrible character of his thoughts! Like the fate that moulded them, they had no similitude in the wide range of this world's agony for man. Suddenly he stopped, and his eyes were riveted upon that part of the wall which was over his bed of straw. Words are inscribed here! A human language, traced by a human hand! He rushes towards them; but his blood freezes as he reads:

"I, Ludovica Sforza, tempted by the gold of the Prince of Tolfi, spent three years in contriving and executing this accursed triumph of my art. When it was completed, the perfidious Tolfi, more devil than man, who conducted me hither one morning, to be witness, as he said, of its perfection, doomed *me* to be the first victim of my own pernicious skill; lest, as he declared, I should divulge the secret, or repeat the effort of my ingenuity. May God pardon him, as I hope he will me, that ministered to his unhallowed purpose! Miserable wretch, whoe'er thou art, that readest these lines, fall on thy knees, and invoke as I have done, His sustaining mercy who alone can nerve thee to meet the vengeance of Tolfi, armed with his tremendous engine, which in a few hours must crush *you*, as it will the needy wretch who made it."

A deep groan burst from Vivenzio. He stood like one transfixed, with dilated eyes, expanded nostrils, and quivering lips, gazing at this fatal inscription. It was as if a voice from the sepulchre had sounded in his ears, "Prepare!"

Hope forsook him. There was his sentence, recorded in those dismal words. The future stood unveiled before him, ghastly and appalling. His brain already feels the descending horror,—his bones seem to crack and crumble in the mighty grasp of the iron walls! Unknowing what it is he does, he fumbles in his garment for some weapon of self-destruction. He clenches his throat in his convulsive gripe, as though he would strangle himself at once. He stares upon the walls, and his warring spirit demands, "Will they not anticipate their office if I dash my head against them?"

An hysterical laugh chokes him as he exclaims, "Why should I? He was but a man who died first in their fierce embrace; and I should be less than man not to do as much!"

The evening sun was descending, and Vivenzio beheld its golden

beams streaming through one of the windows. What a thrill of joy shot through his soul at the sight ! It was a precious link that united him, for the moment, with the world beyond. There was ecstasy in the thought. As he gazed, long and earnestly, it seemed as if the windows had lowered sufficiently for him to reach them.

With one bound he was beneath them—with one wild spring he clung to the bars. Whether it was so contrived, purposely to madden with delight the wretch who looked, he knew not ; but, at the extremity of a long vista, cut through the solid rocks, the ocean, the sky, the setting sun, olive groves, shady walks, and, in the farthest distance, delicious glimpses of magnificent Sicily, burst upon his sight. How exquisite was the cool breeze as it swept across his cheek, loaded with fragrance ! He inhaled it as though it were the breath of continued life. And there was a freshness in the landscape, and in the rippling of the calm green sea, that fell upon his withering heart like dew upon the parched earth.

How he gazed, and panted, and still clung to his hold ! sometimes hanging by one hand, sometimes by the other, and then grasping the bars with both, as loth to quit the smiling paradise outstretched before him ; till exhausted, and his hands swollen and benumbed, he dropped helpless down, and lay stunned for a considerable time by the fall.

When he recovered, the glorious vision had vanished. He was in darkness. He doubted whether it was not a dream that had passed before his sleeping fancy ; but gradually his scattered thoughts returned, and with them came remembrance. Yes ! he had looked once again upon the gorgeous splendour of nature !

Once again his eyes had trembled beneath their veiled lids at the sun's radiance, and sought repose in the soft verdure of the olive tree, or the gentle swell of undulating waves. Oh, that he were a mariner, exposed upon those waves to the worst fury of storm and tempest ; or a very wretch, loathsome with disease, plague-stricken, and his body one leprous contagion from crown to sole, hunted forth to gasp out the remnant of infectious life beneath those verdant trees, so he might shun the destiny upon whose edge he tottered !

Vain thoughts like these would steal over his mind from time to time in spite of himself ; but they scarcely moved it from that stupor into which it had sunk, and which kept him, during the whole night, like one who had been drugged with opium. He was equally insensible to the calls of hunger and of thirst, though the third day was now com-

mening since even a drop of water had passed his lips. He remained on the ground, sometimes sitting, sometimes lying; at intervals, sleeping heavily; and when not sleeping, silently brooding over what was to come, or talking aloud, in disordered speech, of his wrongs, of his friends, of his home, and of those he loved, with a confused mingling of all.

In this pitiable condition the sixth and last morning dawned upon Vivenzio, if dawn it might be called—the dim obscure light which faintly struggled through the ONE SOLITARY window of his dungeon. He could hardly be said to notice the melancholy token. And yet he did notice it; for as he raised his eyes and saw the portentous sign, there was a slight convulsive distortion of his countenance.

But what did attract his notice, and at the sight of which his agitation was excessive, was the change his iron bed had undergone. It was a bed no longer. It stood before him, the visible semblance of a funeral couch or bier! When he beheld this, he started from the ground, and, in raising himself suddenly struck his head against the roof, which was now so low that he could no longer stand upright. “God’s will be done!” was all he said, as he crouched his body, and placed his hand upon the bier; for such it was.

The iron bedstead had been so contrived, by the mechanical art of Ludovico Sforza, that as the advancing walls came in contact with its head and feet, a pressure was produced upon concealed springs, which, when made to play, set in motion a very simple though ingeniously contrived machinery that effected the transformation. The object was, of course, to heighten, in the closing scene of this horrible drama, all the feelings of despair and anguish which the preceding ones had aroused. For the same reason the last window was so made as to admit only a shadowy kind of gloom rather than light, that the wretched captive might be surrounded, as it were, with every seeming preparation for approaching death.

Vivenzio seated himself on his bier. Then he knelt and prayed fervently; and sometimes tears would gush from him. The air seemed thick, and he breathed with difficulty; or it might be that he fancied it was so, from the hot and narrow limits of his dungeon, which were now so diminished that he could neither stand up nor lie down at his full length.

But his wasted spirits and oppressed mind no longer struggled within him. He was past hope, and fear shook him no more. Happy

if thus revenge had struck its final blow ; for he would have fallen beneath it almost unconscious of a pang. But such a lethargy of the soul, after such an excitement of its fiercest passions, had entered into the diabolical calculations of Tolfi ; and the fell artificer of his designs had imagined a counteracting device.

The tolling of an enormous bell struck upon the ears of Vivenzio ! He started. It beat but once. The sound was so close and stunning that it seemed to shatter his very brain, while it echoed through the rocky passages like reverberating peals of thunder. This was followed by a sudden crash of the roof and walls, as if they were about to fall upon and close around him at once. Vivenzio screamed, and instinctively spread forth his arms, as though he had a giant's strength to hold them back. They had moved nearer to him, and were now motionless.

Vivenzio looked up and saw the roof almost touching his head, even as he sat cowering beneath it ; and he felt that a further contraction of but a few inches only must commence the frightful operation. Roused as he had been, he now gasped for breath. His body shook violently—he was bent nearly double. His hands rested upon either wall, and his feet were drawn under him to avoid the pressure in front. Thus he remained for more than an hour, when that deafening bell beat again, and again there came the crash of horrid death. But the concussion was now so great that it struck Vivenzio down.

As he lay gathered up in lessened bulk, the bell beat loud and frequent—crash succeeded crash—and on, and on, and on came the mysterious engine of death, till Vivenzio's smothered groans were heard no more ! He was horribly crushed by the ponderous roof and collapsing sides—and the flattened bier was his *Iron Shroud*.

ANONYMOUS

circa 1835

THE SIEGE OF COCKLAWS

COCKLAWS, a small insignificant Border tower, which reared its little armed battlements in proud perching majesty about the time of the regency of the deceitful Albany, was, as is pretty well known, the scene of a siege, memorable for the object with which it was undertaken, and not less so for the ludicrous circumstances with which it was attended.

This warlike bantam, so appropriately termed Cocklaws, was owned by John Greenlaw, a person not unlike, in his physical attributes, to the little tower of which he was proprietor. He was a man about five feet in height, with grey eyes, which had a peculiar fiery brilliancy, indicative of the spirit with which he was endowed. Active and nimble, he was as restless as an imprisoned popinjay, and did not fail to escape from the small tower which he called the seat of his strength, to imitate the great robbers of the time, in making free with the property of his neighbours, under the shade of the disorders which prevailed at that unhappy period.

Though small and insignificant in his person, Greenlaw considered himself a very powerful man, and nothing annoyed him more than being neglected as a person whom it was beneath the dignity of elevated revenge to chastise. His excursions were like those of a hornet. He did little execution but made a great noise. His tower was so insignificant that he had nowhere to put his spoil, even when it was secured ; but this did not prevent him from exercising eternal " herschips " all around him, not, indeed, to any extent sufficient to draw upon him the attention of the great, but still sufficient to goad, while there was no power to destroy. Nothing, however, would have given the Laird of Cocklaws greater pleasure than to have seen the Earl of Douglas, or some such great personage, stoop to notice his aggressions. He laboured incessantly to be thought a great Border raider, but found himself still classed among the herd of petty depredators.

He did not fail to make himself well known, for his clever, fiery bickerings and pertinacious excursions carried his name everywhere,

but his fame nowhere. His ambition to be thought a great "king of the foray" was notorious; the common people smiled at his weak and innocuous vanity, while the great barons looked upon him as a bumbling wasp, which, though a little annoying, did not deserve to be killed by the honourable arm of a knight. Occasionally he was honoured with a hearty chastisement from some of the common people, when he ventured to meddle with their property; but when this happened he saved his honour by pretending that the proprietor of Cocklaws considered it beneath him to give battle to a person who could not even boast of being a simple esquire.

Occasionally he made an attack upon the castles of the great barons; but he did this merely to gain a character, and to keep up his self-deception of being a great Border warrior. It was seldom that much attention was paid to his skirmishes; it was sufficient that the attack was made by Greenlaw; and if any fears were entertained that he might terrify the women, it was only necessary to send out a few men, who very seldom had much trouble in making the little warrior retire, which he generally did with the nimblest celerity, giving out as his apology, that if the baron did not choose to head his men, he could not expect a fair battle from Cocklaws.

Like other little men, Cocklaws had a large wife. She was the very opposite, in every respect, to her husband—a fat, gaucy, good-humoured Englishwoman, who looked upon the warlike bantam, with whom she was mated, when very young, by the command of her father, with the determination to be amused with what she could not get rid of. When he came in from his forays, he generally made a tremendous clamour for refreshment, stating that the soldier was surely worthy of his hire, and that, if he devoted himself to the hardships and dangers of war, she might, at least, contribute to assuage, in so far as lay in her power, the pains and sufferings of the warrior, when he returned to his castle. The lady was by no means awanting in attention to her domestic duties, and knew that her husband had recourse to these compliments to make him appear in her eyes a person of importance in the country, who drained his blood and exhausted his strength in Border warfare.

The good-natured lady heard these murmurings with the greatest good humour, and contrived to extract from the foibles of a person, who had no other qualities calculated to give her any satisfaction, as much amusement as she could. He had seldom any wounds to show, except

occasionally a puncture with a lance or sword in the back ; and when such required to be dressed by his wife, her operation was always accompanied by expressions of admiration on her part of the extent of the injury, and of the fortitude with which he could bear it ; and by long apologies by him, as to the locality of the wound, mixed up with big curses against the white-livered caitives, who would not fight a man face to face, but basely got behind him and wounded him, while he was engaged in dealing out death against his enemies in front.

Sometimes she complimented him on the success of exploits which she knew had turned out unfortunate ; and then, with the greatest adroitness, she would make an allusion to the tower which, she supposed, owed its safety entirely to the terror of his name. This was a very sensitive point with Cocklaws. He could get no one to attack his stronghold. It was so insignificant a turret, that no person would be at the pains to carry a mangonell to batter it to the earth ; and then, like all the rest of these small erections, it could easily defy the force of ordinary arms. Nobody meddled with it, while the laird's depredations were confined to his mock system of noisy innocuous warfare. The lady adroitly found a cause for this in the terror of his name. He allowed her to retain this idea, which, indeed, had been suggested by himself ; but he secretly wished for nothing more ardently than an attack, not that he courted an opportunity to fight in a serious deadly way, but that he might derive some *éclat* and status from his place being considered worthy of that notice, and have an opportunity of showing his wife that, though a small man, he was possessed of the mettle of a great warrior.

His boastings were in proportion to his ambition of being considered brave and terrible. He was particularly fond of having a hit at the English ; not that he wished to oppose himself to the Lady of Cocklaws, an Englishwoman, in whose eyes, like every well-disposed husband, he wished to appear deserving of her affection ; but he depreciated the neighbouring nation, because he might thereby have an opportunity of forming a contrast—he being the representative of one of the contrasted parties. He could see no merit in Percy or Owen Glendower, or even in Henry of Lancaster himself, and dared his wife to show where it lay.

" There's naething I wish mair fervently," said he, " than to hae a tourney wi' some o' thae Southernns ; and mair especially wi' that brainwud cratur, Harry Percy, whom they ca' Hotspur. He wadna

escape the point o' my lance, as he did Douglas's at Otterbourne ; and I canna but think it was a sad disgrace to oor nation, that they allooted him the advantage he got at Homildon Hill. If the Regent had called upon me at my castle and offered me fair terms, or even if he had graciously asked the assistance o' the representative o' the ancient family o' Greenlaw o' Cocklaws, I micht hae been prevailed upon to gie them the benefit o' a day's wark o' my airm ; but I suppose Albany was afraid I micht acquire owre muckle power, by showin' the contrast between me and other men, and prudently did without me. But hoo did he do ? He got a' his army pierced wi' the cloth-yard shafts o' England. Hoo foolish people are, to sacrifice themsels to illiberal suspicions ! I wadna hae made a bad use o' my superiority. A' I micht hae asked wad hae been to mak' me a knicht, Sir John Greenlaw o' Cocklaws. I may yet hae an opportunity o' measuring arms wi' Percy ; or, may be, that renegade March, wha has sauld his country to the ungratefu' Lancaster."

"It is very extraordinary," said the Lady of Cocklaws, "that, in all these Border feuds, neither English nor Scots show themselves before our castle. It's very honourable to your courage and the character of your powers of defence ; yet, my dear Cocklaws, I doubt much if, with all the superiority of your warlike qualities, you could stand out against the armies of my countrymen. I mean, of course, if they were very numerous."

"Let them be as numerous as locusts," cried Cocklaws—"ay, as the motes that dance i' the noonday sun ; I an' my auld castle wud be a match for them a'. What ! woman, is that a' your boasted sense, is that a' the knowledge ye hae o' yer husband, is that a' the respect ye hae for the bluid o' the Cocklaws an' the honour o' Scotland ? Let Percy and Douglas try their hand at opening the door o' the castle o' Cocklaws. Stane and lime, though put thegither as firmly as in the castle o' Jedburgh, are naething without the saul within. Nae castle could be stormed wi' me in't. It's impossible, my Lady Cocklaws. Our faes ken that too, or why have they no tried their mangonells on my towers lang ere this ? They've mair sense. Percy winna face me, I warrant him."

Some days after this conversation, in which Lady Cocklaws yielded a dutiful assent, her only object in opposing her husband being merely to draw him out for her own humour, a messenger came running up to the tower in breathless haste, and said that the whole English army

was marching to besiege Cocklaws. The lady smiled at the intelligence, thinking it was some device of her husband to produce a fear which he would have the merit of contrasting with his coldness and courage. She observed in Cocklaws, however, no indication of a previous knowledge of the fact ; and his manner, which exhibited more solicitude than ordinary, rather falsified her suspicions. Her doubts were soon put an end to by the appearance of the army before the tower. The whole English troops seemed to have collected at that spot. The number seemed equal to the taking of all Scotland. What did they mean by directing the strength of an elephant in crushing a gnat ? The matter seemed incomprehensible to the lady, and even Cocklaws himself could not conceal that he thought there was *some* chance of his being obliged to succumb. While hesitating what step to take, a messenger delivered to him a message from the Regent Albany, to hold out until succours were sent him, which would be soon ; and Cocklaws' men thought that all the indifference with which he had been formerly treated was to be made up by the immense accumulation of honour now heaped upon him.

"What are you going to do, Cocklaws ?" inquired his lady.

"Fecht them to be sure, sae lang as there's a drap o' bluid in the kame o' our cock's crest," answered the little warrior. "The Regent Albany has sent me a confidential message desiring me to hauld out as lang as I can. My castle is to be the bane o' contention between the twa kingdoms. Cocklaws will decide the strife. Percy and Albany will shake hands owre my table, an' I canna fail to be knighted by them baith."

This communication appeared to the lady more remarkable still. There must be some humour in the case, she thought. The Duke of Albany write to Cocklaws to oppose his cockle-shell of a castle to the army of England ! The thing appeared so utterly absurd, that, were it not verified by the absolute presence of Hotspur and Douglas, with their army sitting before the tower like a swarm of locusts about to attack a single stalk of barley, she would at once have set it down to the credit of her husband's ingenuity in devising modes of enhancing his warlike character. The supposition of an attempt to turn her husband's weakness to account of frolic or amusement was as much out of the question as the seriousness of the intended attack. Armies are often collected, marched for hundreds of miles, and supported by food snatched from the hungry mouths of the inhabitants of an enemy's country, often to please the whim or humour the caprice of an absolute

monarch ; but so much trouble is seldom taken to make a conquest of a little fun or merriment, at the expense of so insignificant a being as Cocklaws. This supposition appeared to the lady equally hostile to reason and common sense. What other supposition could she imagine ? There was none. The affair was beyond the wits of a woman to understand, and she therefore trusted to the chapter of consequences for an explanation. She continued to watch the motions of the army from the loop-hole adjacent to her bedroom.

The English proceeded to make preparation for attacking the little march tower. The hero of Homildon Hill sent his herald to blow his horn, almost sufficient to blow the cockle-shell to pieces, and demand the master of Cocklaws to surrender his tower to the arms of Henry of Lancaster, King of England. This extraordinary announcement greeted the ears of the lady, and she listened to hear the answer that would be given by her husband. Cocklaws, who placed himself in such a position as his wife could have no difficulty in hearing him, and perched upon one of the little jutting lateral turrets of the fortification like a jackdaw on an old chimney-top, cried out in the affected and jaunty tone of a true knight :

“ Gae and tell your master, Percy, commonly called Hotspur, to tell Henry o’ Lancaster, wha sits on a throne that belongs to Richard the Second, and to which he has nae mair richt than I hae to the throne o’ Scotland—or maybe less, if the pedigree o’ the Cocklaws were traced—that the laird and governor o’ Cocklaws has nae intention o’ desertin’ his country, his wife, his castle, or his honour, an’ that he will defend them a’ wi’ the last drap o’ the bluid that can be wrung frae the cock’s kame o’ his auncient crest.”

“ Bravo, Cocklaws ! ” cried the herald, unable to retain the severe and serious tone of his office, while the good lady sat smiling through the loophole. “ This is a right noble speech,” thought she, “ and worthy of a better cause. That immense army surely cannot seriously intend to injure us and our small fortified hut. The nobility of the lion disdains the small victims of humbler animals. Hotspur and Cocklaws ! Such a combination of sounds ! Surely there can be no intention of an attack.”

The lady’s thoughts deceived her. In a short time, every preparation seemed making for a serious attack. The Castle of Jedburgh itself could not have been the object of more serious displays of hostility. There was, in the first place, hurled up opposite the tower a number of

those fierce-looking engines, more terrible in their aspect than the catapults and battering-rams of Roman celebrity, called trebuchets and mangonells. It seemed as if one stroke of those engines would be enough for the destruction of the turret ; and the disproportion between the numbers of the besieging army and the few men contained in the fortified place was not greater than that between the engines of destruction and the thing to be destroyed.

The ambition of Cocklaws was now about to be gratified. He looked down upon the terrible display of power with the highest pride. " Nae wonder," he said, " that my stronghold has been sae lang o' gettin' a visit. It cost nae sma' pains to bring thae engines to Cocklaws. I suppose they hae been made on purpose. The English hae at last been obliged to acknowledge my importance ; and I only wonder they did not try to conciliate me by bribes and promises, and thereby endeavour to get me to gie up my allegiance, and carry owre my knowledge and experience o' war, wi' my extraordinary courage, to mak' up the deficiency o' the renegade March, and cast the balance o' war in favour o' England. But they hae judged better o' their man. They kenned I wadna surrender, and sae they hae prepared this immense array o' engines, ignorant that they want the saul that animates my castle."

The engines having been erected, the army approached, and the twang of the cloth shafts leaving the cords, and the booming of the engines upon the wall, announced the beginning of the attack. Cocklaws was upon the tower in the midst of his men, exhibiting the courage of a terrier in attacking a bull. He let fly his arrows at the English, and made a noise in crying and bellowing to his adherents which was intended to reach the ears of his wife, whom he visited at intervals, with a view to keep up her courage, saying, " We shall beat them a', Marjory, my dear. They will soon see the man they hae to deal wi', if they haena already felt the force o' my arrows."

The noise increased ; and there appeared, both without and within, all the haste and confusion of a regular siege. The lady, however, was astonished to find that the battering of the engines produced no effect on the walls, and the arrows and missiles killed none of the besieged. Her astonishment increased, when, in a little time, the battering ceased—the army, deserting the attack, fell back—and the siege seemed for a time, at least, to be abandoned. The moment this occurred, Cocklaws ran to his wife, exclaiming : " Noo, ye see, my love, the effects o' true

courage. Thae men, wi' their steel jackets, their braw armour, their trebuchets an' batterin'-rams, want heart. Ae perfeck warrior, wi' the assistance o' a handfu' o' men, has put to the rout the hail army o' England. I wunner if they'll try me again ? "

" I think they will better let you alone, Cocklaws," replied the lady, whose astonishment was still unabated. " How many have you killed, do you think ? "

" I couldna count them—they were sae numerous," replied Cocklaws. " I saw them fa'in' either in death or fright on ilka side, as thick as sparrows peppered wi' sparrow-hail. I wunner if Albany will mak' me a lord, without stoppin' at the knight ! "

The next day the attack was renewed with the same display of power. The farce of the previous day was repeated. A battering was kept up for a time, a number of arrows discharged, and then a recession, the very same as the day before. Cocklaws' pride waxed stronger and stronger. He was already, in imagination, Lord Cocklaws !

In the evening the herald's trumpet sounded a parley, and a request was made that Cocklaws would allow Hotspur and Douglas to visit him in the tower, with a view to adjust terms of peace. The request was admitted ; and the proud governor waited the arrival of his humbled enemies.

The parties arrived, and, along with them, the Duke of Albany, Regent of Scotland. Cocklaws received them with the condescension and kindness that was due to brave men whom he had beaten.

After the warriors had taken seats, the conqueror conceived that it was incumbent upon him to show the expected generosity of the lion. It was, he thought, a noble opportunity for a display of that feeling which, from the days of Alexander and Caesar, had been exhibited in the hour of triumph and victory, by all conquerors, to the victims of their arms. He thought he saw, in the bright eye of Albany, a lurking request of forgiveness and pity towards the heads of the besieging army ; and he did not hesitate to give the Regent as much encouragement on this delicate subject as he considered consistent with the dignity of his character and the peculiarity of the position in which he stood. The Regent of Scotland was one individual—doubtless a great one—seeing he had the power of making, as he no doubt would, John Greenlaw Lord Cocklaws ; but the respect due to a person having so much authority must, he saw, be tempered,

at least in the presence of those whom he had conquered, as any improper display of it would at once lower his dignity and depreciate the boon of mercy he intended to vouchsafe to them. After looking, therefore, to Albany with a condescending kindness, enough to show that, while he would grant his request of mercy and forgiveness, he would only do it on condition of its being appropriately and humbly solicited, he turned his little twinkling orbs on Hotspur and Douglas, with just enough of fire and fury to show them that he had not altogether forgotten the insult which they had offered and he had chastised ; and to impress upon their minds a recollection of his extraordinary character, and a memory of the warlike energies which had overcome them, and which they were soon to see changed for the placable indications of a kind and forgiving spirit.

While these thoughts were passing through the mind of Cocklaws, very different were the cogitations of his visitors. Albany was unfolding a paper ; and the three greatest men of their time were, with grave faces and serious thoughts, whispering some important things to each other which they did not wish Cocklaws to hear. As they were not in any hurry to leave off these rather unpolite indications, Cocklaws attributed their conduct to irresolution and delicacy in presuming to approach the subject of their errand. He therefore thought himself bound to assist their bashfulness ; and, rising from his chair, he said, with much show of condescension :

“ My Lords—Dinna think I’m unable to appreciate the feelin’s wi’ which yer noble breasts are nae doot at present filled. He wha fechts best can best forgie ; an’ there’s nane sae guid at askin’ as he wha has experienced the pleasure o’ grantin’. I hae nae wish that ye should think I’m incapable, in the hour o’ victory, an’ in the exultation o’ triumph, o’ feelin’ for the situation o’ my enemies, wham the fortune o’ war has put in my power. Though I, mysel’, am ignorant o’ what it is to be beaten, I can easily conceive that the situation is far frae bein’ pleasant ; an’ it’s no my wish to mak’ it mair disagreeable than ye already seem to feel it. Ye need, therefore, hae nae hesitation or fear in tellin’ me yer minds. Cocklaws’ bark is waur than his bite ; an’ ye already ken the sound o’ the ane as weel as the force o’ the ither.”

On hearing this speech, Hotspur was clearly inclined to carry on the joke ; and was actually, according to his rapid manner, about to throw himself at Cocklaws’ feet to ask for mercy, when the grave and

austere Albany, having seized him by the arm, and whispered something which made him desist, proceeded to accost Cocklaws as follows :

“Cocklaws,” said he, “your good sense will tell you that the English have not been serious in this attack upon your castle. One proper blow of one of these mangonells would shatter this tower ‘to atoms. The object of this sham siege is to make Henry of England believe that his generals, Hotspur and Douglas, have seriously attacked Scotland, while they, with my co-operation, and we, being all friends, have a very different object in view. As my subject, then, I request of you to sign this treaty, whereby you promise, unless relieved by me within six weeks, to surrender your tower to the English. We will explain to you, afterwards, our intentions more fully ; and I shall take care to reward you for the part you have already played.”

The request of a sovereign cannot be denied. The thunderstruck Cocklaws signed the treaty and the generals departed. He afterwards heard, what became known to the world, that this farce was acted, with a view to blind Henry, King of England, and to operate as a cover for the rebellion which soon broke out in the north of England, and which ended in the famous battle of Hartlefield, where Percy was slain. It has generally been supposed that Cocklaws should have been knighted, but Albany, when the subject was mentioned to him, expressed his displeasure at being put in mind of a circumstance which was, in the end, unfavourable to Scotland.

CHARLES GIBBON
1843-1890

A LEGEND OF '45

“ I WAS in the nursery at the time, as you can understand ; but the chief person of the tale was my father’s closest friend, and he was my counsellor in some kittle passes of my life in after days. He never mentioned this business himself ; but my father, who knew the particulars brawly, used to tell it to me often, and he bequeathed the story to me as one of his most valuable legacies.”

The old man’s face brightened, and his voice became firmer as he proceeded.

“ You see yon picture hanging on the left of your mother, Balquherrie ?—that was your grandfather, Hugh Outram. You see what a black-a-vice chiel he was, and I can tell you there was a fire in his een whiles that made some folk say he had the gift of second sight. At any rate, he had the pith of a giant in his arms, and the courage of a lion in his heart. He could love—like a mother ; he could hate—like a jealous wife. My story is about him.

“ He courted Mistress Graham, of Eskbank ; he followed her night and day ; he was devoted to her body and soul—in fact he was clean crack about her. But she was won by Corbet of Dowiemuir. When that became known, Hugh Outram shut himself up here in Balquherrie and would have no speech with any living creature for awhile.

“ At last my father got speaking with him, and showed him the duties he was neglecting because of a disappointment that could not be helped, but could be easily enough mended. Hugh stepped out of his shell, and took up the work that was appointed for him in seeing after the welfare of those dependent on him. When he was told that Mistress Corbet had been brought to bed of a daughter, he said, ‘ Lord, smile on the bairn,’ although he never could be brought to say that he forgave Corbet.

“ Prince Charlie raised his standard in Glenfinnan, and Corbet was the first to place himself under it, with all whom he could influence. Hugh took arms for the Government within a few days after ; but my father, who served with him, was satisfied that he decided on this

course more because of his hate for the man who had won his lady than because of his regard for the house of Hanover. No doubt he had his thought of meeting him in battle, and once, at the mention of the possibility of it, my father was frightened by the fire that flamed in Hugh's een.

"Be that as it may, he did his duty well and bravely. He would have prevented Cope marching like a stray goose into the north while the rebels were, unchecked, marching on the south, but his word was not heeded at the time. The prince made a brilliant run over the country; and at length the Duke of Cumberland chased him back to Culloden, where the Stuart cause was drowned in blood.

"After the battle there were days and weeks of persistent pursuit of the fugitive rebels. The mercenary troops were pitiless; and men of our own country consented to or took part in cruelties that will shame the victory so long as the memory of them lasts. But Hugh Outram was disappointed if he had been calculating on coming across Corbet. So far they had not met.

"He had command of a company of Hessians—the most malignant, because the most indifferent, of all the pursuers—and he was in chase of a score of rebels who were making their way to the west. My father had twenty-three lads left of forty whom he had led from Pitnafour, and he was on the same track as his friend. Reports had been received that the scattered fugitives were rendezvousing in Lochaber, with the intention of making a stand yet in defence of the Stuart, in spite of what had happened. The duke was mightily wroth at this, and was not likely to show mercy to those who fell into his hands, still less to those who failed in the discharge of the savage duty entrusted to them.

"As it happened, the companies of Outram and of my father met in Glendhu, within three miles of Dowiemuir. They encamped for the night, and the two friends slept together in a shepherd's shieling. In the cold grey of morning they were aroused by a Hessian, who acquainted them that he had traced a rebel officer to a farmhouse, distant only half a mile. They marched instantly on the place, surrounded the house, and the search commenced, hot and furious.

"Nobody appeared to offer them opposition, and the house was as quiet as if there were not a living creature in it. The officers remained outside, and soon the fellow who had raised the halloo stepped out of the house, carrying a greeting bairn in his arms. After him

walked a lady with hair and dress disarranged, and a face white as a fine Holland sheet, but steady as a rock.

"She pleaded with them piteously to spare the life of her bairn, and the soldiers threatened to stick it on the point of their bayonets unless she confessed where the father lay hidden.

"She begged them to spare the child, but would not answer the question. The bayonets were fixed, the bairn raised high in the arms of a big rascal as if holding it ready to be impaled.

"Still the woman pleaded, and would not hear the condition on which alone her prayer would be granted.

"They said they would count six, and then proceed to the execution if she did not yield. They began to count, and she did not flinch until she observed Outram, who was grimly watching what passed. Then she trembled to her heels and groaned, sinking on the ground, for she concluded that there was neither pity nor mercy to expect from him for the wife and infant of Corbet of Dowiemuir.

"It was the lady herself Outram was looking at: his enemy and all that was precious to him were at his mercy. No man ever had a fairer opportunity of wreaking a terrible vengeance on his foe, without moving a finger; he had only to remain silent, and he was assured of the utmost retaliation for whatever he might have suffered.

"He turned to my father, who was curious as to what he would do:

" 'You must command here,' he said, with big sobs in his throat, and turning his back on the scene, 'but save the bairn and spare the woman.'

"The child was placed on the ground beside its mother, who looked with wide parched eyes at her preserver, recognising his kindness and yet doubting him. She seemed to have lost the power of moving or speaking; but when she saw the soldiers set fire to the house at the four corners, she started, clutching the bairn to her bosom, trembling and moaning, her bloodshot eyes leaping from her head in fright.

"When she saw the flames spring up to the thatch, and heard the burning joists crackle, she louped to her feet and walked straight over to Hugh Outram.

" 'Sir,' she said, 'you were once my friend; it was Heaven's will that I should lose your friendship; but you are a man, and I a woman nigh mad with pain. My husband he lies in there, sick and wounded sore, so that he cannot move, and, without help, must die in the flame. You are his foe, at home and in the field; but sir, he is my husband and the father of my bairn, and—I love him.'

" Hugh Outram stood glowering at the blaze that was working out his worst spite. The devil bade him stand still ; but he looked at the woman's face ; he listened to the greeting bairn, and he made answer :

" ' Madam, your husband was my worst foe, but that shall not make me the less your friend. He has taken from me my best hope, but he shall not take from me your respect or my own.'

" She first stared at him not knowing what he meant to do, and aye the house was burning, and the flames grew bigger.

" He cried to my father : ' Turn your face another way, Pitna, that you may not see me. Call off the lads, haste down the glen with them, and I will deliver the traitor to you without fail.'

" My father guessed what he was meaning, and in pity for the lady did not say a word to the contrary. He called the soldiers together, and making them believe that the rebel had escaped down the glen, led them away in full chase.

" Outram asked the lady where her man was hidden ; she feared to answer, for she had heard him promise to deliver the traitor. He pointed to the burning house, saying : ' Trust me.'

" She told him what he required to know, and he marched into the house, the flames hissing at him and scorching his clothes, the beams crackling above him and tumbling about him, the smoke fluffing in his face choking and blinding him. But in spite of flame and smoke, he made his way to the hiding-place of the rebel, and found him lying as though he were already dead. Outram lifted his enemy in his arms, and carried him out from the fiery grave to the place where Mistress Corbet was on her knees, praying God to help and shield her true friend.

" He laid him down on the ground beside her. First she looked at her guidman, and saw that life was in him yet, and next she looked up at her friend, but she could not speak a word. She saw that the hair was nearly burnt off his head, and his left hand was scarred, so that it bore the mark until the day he died. She tore her gown, and tied a strip of it round his hand. Then she got water from the well and bathed her man's head and face, while the bairn was croodling on his breast.

" Outram got a horse and conveyed them five miles up the glen to a shepherd's bigging near Loch Fey—he was obliged to hold Corbet in the saddle the whole road ; and there was no speech passed between them. But when he had seen them bestowed in the cot and was going away, the lady lifted up her bairn—a lassie, I ought to have told

you—and bade her kiss him. The wee thing put her arms round his neck and cuddled him, and he trembled like a willow wand in a storm. Mistress Corbet stooped down with big tears in her een now and kissed his hand.

“ ‘ God will bless you, sir,’ was all that she could say.

“ He went and looked at Corbet where he lay, helpless and insensible, but beginning to breathe in a natural way.

“ ‘ He will live,’ said Outram, stepping to the door, ‘ and I hope you will be happy. Think on me whiles ; I am paying a high price for a kind place in your memory—and I am content.’

“ She did not understand then how high the price was that he was prepared to pay ; but afterwards she heard it all from my father.

“ To him Outram went as fast as he could, and found him at the place where they had camped during the night.

“ ‘ I promised to deliver the traitor to you, Pitna,’ he said, as quietly as though there was nothing out of the ordinary in what he was doing, ‘ and I keep faith with you. I am he—there is my sword.’

“ He laid the sword down, and my father took it up, after staring at him a minute, fancying he was mad.

“ ‘ I understand you,’ Pitna answered. ‘ I know what you have done, and—although it was rash and perilous—damn it, sir, I think you acted nobly. Take back your sword ; I can keep a secret.’

“ ‘ No,’ said Outram, shaking his head, ‘ that would involve you in the penalty for my treason.’

“ He went straight to Cumberland himself, and the duke received him graciously enough, for his repute was high.

“ ‘ What is the penalty, excellency, for an officer under your command who aids a rebel to escape ? ’ he asked.

“ ‘ Death,’ cried the duke, loud and fierce.

“ ‘ Then I yield to my fate,’ he said, and told what he had done.

“ His Grace was furious, and Outram was arrested. But his past services pleaded for him, and the President Forbes, with other gentlemen of weight, and whose adherence to the Government was beyond doubt, joined in an appeal for clemency. The duke had not the grace to appreciate Outram’s conduct, but he had discretion enough not to proceed to extremity in such a case as this. So the only punishment inflicted on Outram was the cancelling of his commission, and that he did not regard as any loss. He was liberated, and spent his days usefully at home.”

ANDREW LANG

1844-1912

IN THE WRONG PARADISE

AN OCCIDENTAL APOLOGUE

IN the drawing-room, or, as it is more correctly called, the "dormitory," of my club, I had been reading a volume named *Sur l'Humanité Posthume*, by M. d'Assier, a French follower of Comte. The mixture of positivism and ghost-stories highly diverted me. Moved by the sagacity and pertinence of M. d'Assier's arguments for a limited and fortuitous immortality, I fell into such an uncontrollable fit of laughter as caused, I could see, first annoyance and then anxiety in those members of my club whom my explosion of mirth had awakened. As I still chuckled and screamed, it appeared to me that the noise I made gradually grew fainter and more distant, seeming to resound in some vast empty space, even more funereal and melancholy than the dormitory of my club, the "Tepidarium." It has happened to most people to laugh themselves awake out of a dream, and every one who has done so must remember the ghastly, hollow, and maniacal sound of his own mirth. It rings horribly in a quiet room where there has been, as the Veddahs of Ceylon say is the case in the world at large, "nothing to laugh at." Dean Swift once came to himself, after a dream, laughing thus hideously at the following conceit: "I told Apronia to be very careful especially about the legs." Well, the explosions of my laughter crackled in a yet more weird and lunatic fashion about my own ears as I slowly became aware that I had died of an excessive sense of the ludicrous, and that the space in which I was so inappropriately giggling was, indeed, the fore-court of the House of Hades. As I grew more absolutely convinced of this truth, and began dimly to discern a strange world visible in a sallow light, like that of the London streets when a black fog hangs just over the houses, my hysterical chuckling gradually died away. Amusement at the poor follies of mortals was succeeded by an awful and anxious curiosity as to the state of immortality and the life after death. Already it was certain that "the *Manes* are somewhat," and

that annihilation is the dream of people sceptical through lack of imagination. The scene around me now resolved itself into a high grey upland country, bleak and wild, like the waste pastoral places of Liddesdale. As I stood expectant, I observed a figure coming towards me at some distance. The figure bore in its hand a gun, and, as I am short-sighted, I at first conceived that he was the gamekeeper. "This affair," I tried to say to myself, "is only a dream after all; I shall wake and forget my nightmare."

But still the man drew nearer, and I began to perceive my error. Gamekeepers do not usually paint their faces red and green, neither do they wear scalp-locks, a tuft of eagle's feathers, moccasins, and buffalo-hide cloaks, embroidered with representations of war and the chase. This was the accoutrement of the stranger who now approached me, and whose copper-coloured complexion indicated that he was a member of the Red Indian, or, as the late Mr. Morgan called it, the "Ganowanian" race. The stranger's attire was old and clouted; the barrel of his flint-lock musket was rusted, and the stock was actually overgrown with small funguses. It was a peculiarity of this man that everything he carried was more or less broken and outworn. The barrel of his piece was riven, his tomahawk was a mere shard of rusted steel, on many of his accoutrements the vapour of fire had passed. He approached me with a stately bearing, and, after saluting me in the fashion of his people, gave me to know that he welcomed me to the land of spirits, and that he was deputed to carry me to the paradise of the Ojibbeways. "But, sir," I cried in painful confusion, "there is here some great mistake. I am no Ojibbeway, but an Agnostic; the after-life of spirits is only (as one of our great teachers says) 'an hypothesis based on contradictory probabilities'; and I really must decline to accompany you to a place of which the existence is uncertain, and which, if it does anywhere exist, would be uncongenial in the extreme to a person of my habits."

To this remonstrance my Ojibbeway Virgil answered, in effect, that in the enormous passenger traffic between the earth and the next worlds mistakes must and frequently do occur. *Quisque suos patimur manes*, as the Roman says, is the rule, but there are many exceptions. Many a man finds himself in the paradise of a religion not his own, and suffers from the consequences. This was, in brief, the explanation of my guide, who could only console me by observing that if I felt ill at ease in the Ojibbeway paradise, I might, perhaps, be more fortunate

in that of some other creed. "As for your Agnostics," said he, "their main occupation in their own next world is to read the poetry of George Eliot and the philosophical works of Mr. J. S. Mill." On hearing this, I was much consoled for having missed the entrance to my proper sphere, and I prepared to follow my guide with cheerful alacrity, into the paradise of the Ojibbeways.

Our track lay, at first, along the "Path of Souls," and the still, grey air was only disturbed by a faint rustling and twittering of spirits on the march. We seemed to have journeyed but a short time, when a red light shone on the left hand of the way. As we drew nearer, this light appeared to proceed from a prodigious strawberry, a perfect mountain of a strawberry. Its cool and shining sides seemed very attractive to a thirsty Soul. A red man, dressed strangely in the feathers of a raven, stood hard by, and loudly invited all passers-by to partake of this refreshment. I was about to excavate a portion of the monstrous strawberry (being partial to that fruit), when my guide held my hand and whispered in a low voice that they who accepted the invitation of the man that guarded the strawberry were lost. He added that, into whatever paradise I might stray, I must beware of tasting any of the food of the departed. All who yield to the temptation must inevitably remain where they have put the food of the dead to their lips. "You," said my guide, with a slight sneer, "seem rather particular about your future home, and you must be especially careful to make no error." Thus admonished, I followed my guide to the river which runs between our world and the paradise of the Ojibbeways. A large stump of a tree lies half across the stream, the other half must be crossed by the agility of the wayfarer. Little children do but badly here, and "an Ojibbeway woman," said my guide, "can never be consoled when her child dies before it is fairly expert in jumping. Such young children they cannot expect to meet again in paradise." I made no reply, but was reminded of some good and unhappy women I had known on earth, who were inconsolable because their babes had died before being sprinkled with water by a priest. These babes they, like the Ojibbeway matrons, "could not expect to meet again in paradise." To a grown-up spirit the jump across the mystic river presented no difficulty, and I found myself instantly among the wigwams of the Ojibbeway heaven. It was a remarkably large village, and as far as the eye could see huts and tents were erected along the river. The sound of magic songs and of drums

filled all the air, and in the fields the spirits were playing lacrosse. All the people of the village had deserted their homes and were enjoying themselves at the game. Outside one hut, however, a perplexed and forlorn phantom was sitting, and to my surprise I saw that he was dressed in European clothes. As we drew nearer I observed that he wore the black garb and white neck-tie of a minister in some religious denomination, and on coming to still closer quarters I recognised an old acquaintance, the Rev. Peter McSnadden. Now Peter had been a "jined member" of that mysterious "U.P. Kirk" which, according to the author of *Lothair*, was founded by the Jesuits for the greater confusion of Scotch theology. Peter, I knew, had been active as a missionary among the Red Men in Canada; but I had neither heard of his death nor could conceive how his shade had found its way into a paradise so inappropriate as that in which I encountered him. Though never very fond of Peter, my heart warmed to him, as the heart sometimes does to an acquaintance unexpectedly met in a strange land. Coming cautiously behind him, I slapped Peter on the shoulder, whereon he leaped up with a wild unearthly yell, his countenance displaying lively tokens of terror. When he recognised me he first murmured, "I thought it was these murdering Apaches again"; and it was long before I could soothe him, or get him to explain his fears, and the circumstance of his appearance in so strange a final home. "Sir," said Peter, "it's just some terrible mistake. For twenty years was I preaching to these poor painted bodies anent heaven and hell, and trying to win them from their fearsome notions about a place where they would play at the ba' on the Sabbath, and the like shameful heathen diversions. Many a time did I round it to them about a far, far other place—

Where congregations ne'er break up,
And sermons never end!

And now, lo and behold, here I am in their heathenish Gehenna, where the Sabbath-day is just clean neglected; indeed, I have lost count myself, and do not know one day from the other. Oh, man, it's just rideec'lous. A body—I mean a soul—does not know where to turn." Here Peter, whose accent I cannot attempt to reproduce (he was a Paisley man), burst into honest tears. Though I could not but agree with Peter that his situation was "just rideec'lous," I consoled him as well as I might, saying that a man should make the best of every position, and that "where there was life there was hope," a sentiment

of which I instantly perceived the futility in this particular instance. "Ye do not know the worst," the Rev. Mr. McSnadden went on. "I am here to make them sport, like Samson among the Philistines. Their paradise would be no paradise to them if they had not a pale-face, as they say, to scalp and tomahawk. And I am that pale-face. Before you can say 'scalping-knife' these awful Apaches may be on me, taking my scalp and other leeberties with my person. It grows again, my scalp does, immediately; but that's only that they may take it some other day." The full horror of Mr. McSnadden's situation now dawned upon me, but at the same time I could not but perceive that, without the presence of some pale-face to torture—Peter or another—paradise would, indeed, be no paradise to a Red Indian. In the same way Tertullian (or some other early Father) has remarked that the pleasures of the blessed will be much enhanced by what they observe of the torments of the wicked. As I was reflecting thus two wild yells burst upon my hearing. One came from a band of Apache spirits who had stolen into the Ojibbeway village; the other scream was uttered by my unfortunate friend. I confess that I fled with what speed I might, nor did I pause till the groans of the miserable Peter faded in the distance. He was, indeed, a man in the wrong paradise.

In my anxiety to avoid sharing the fate of Peter at the hands of the Apaches, I had run out of sight and sound of the Ojibbeway village. When I paused I found myself alone, on a wide sandy tract, at the extremity of which was an endless thicket of dark poplar-trees, a grove dear to Persephone. Here and there in the dank sand, half buried by the fallen generations of yellow poplar-leaves, were pits dug, a cubit every way, and there were many ruined altars of ancient stones. On some were engraved figures of a divine pair, a king and queen seated on a throne, while men and women approached them with cakes in their hands or with the sacrifice of a cock. While I was admiring these strange sights, I beheld as it were a moving light among the deeps of the poplar thicket, and presently saw coming towards me a young man clad in white raiment and of a radiant aspect. In his hand he bore a golden wand whereon were wings of gold. The first down of manhood was on his lip; he was in that season of life when youth is most gracious. Then I knew him to be no other than Hermes of the golden rod, the guide of the souls of men outworn. He took my hand with a word of welcome, and led me through the gloom of the poplar-trees.

Like Thomas the Rhymer, on his way to Fairyland—

We saw neither sun nor moon,
But we heard the roaring of the sea.

This eternal "swowing of a flode" was the sound made by the circling stream of Oceanus, as he turns on his bed, washing the base of the White Rock, and the sands of the region of dreams. So we fled on onwards till we came to marvellous lofty gates of black adamant, that rose before us like the steep side of a hill. On the left side of the gates we beheld a fountain flowing from beneath the roots of a white cypress-tree, and to this fountain my guide forbade me to draw near. "There is another yonder," he said, pointing to the right hand, "a stream of still water that issues from the Lake of Memory, and there are guards who keep that stream from the lips of the profane. Go to them and speak thus: 'I am the child of earth and of the starry sky, yet heavenly is my lineage, and this yourselves know right well. But I am perishing with thirst, so give me speedily of that still water which floweth forth of the mere of Memory.' And they will give thee to drink of that spring divine, and then shalt thou dwell with the heroes and the blessed." So I did as he said, and went before the guardians of the water. Now they were veiled, and their voices, when they answered me, seemed to come from far away. "Thou comest to the pure, from the pure," they said, "and thou art a suppliant of holy Persephone. Happy and most blessed art thou, advance to the reward of the crown desirable, and be no longer mortal, but divine." Then a darkness fell upon me, and lifted again like mist on the hills, and we found ourselves in the most beautiful place that can be conceived, a meadow of that short grass which grows on some shores beside the sea. There were large spaces of fine and solid turf, but, where the little streams flowed from the delicate-tinted distant mountains, there were narrow valleys full of all the flowers of a southern spring. Here grew narcissus and hyacinths, violets and creeping thyme, and crocus and the crimson rose, as they blossomed on the day when the milk-white bull carried off Europa. Beyond the level land beside the sea, between these coasts and the far-off hills, was a steep lonely rock, on which were set the shining temples of the Grecian faith. The blue seas that begirt the coasts were narrow, and ran like rivers between many islands not less fair than the country to which we were come, while other isles, each with its crest of clear-cut hills, lay westward, far away, and receding into the place of the sunset. Then I recognised the Fortunate

Islands spoken of by Pindar, and the paradise of the Greeks. "Round these the ocean breezes blow and golden flowers are glowing, some from the land on trees of splendour, and some the water feedeth, with wreaths whereof they entwine their hands."¹ And, as Pindar says again, "for them shineth below the strength of the sun, while in our world it is night, and the space of crimson-flowered meadows before their city is full of the shade of frankincense-trees and of fruits of gold. And some in horses and in bodily feats, and some in dice, and some in harp-playing have delight, and among them thriveth all fair flowering bliss; and fragrance ever streameth through the lovely land as they mingle incense of every kind upon the altars of the gods." In this beautiful country I took great delight, now watching the young men leaping and running (and they were marvellously good over a short distance of ground), now sitting in a chariot whereto were harnessed steeds swifter than the wind, like those that, Homer says, "the gods gave, glorious gifts, to Peleus." And the people, young and old, received me kindly, welcoming me in their Greek speech, which was like the sound of music. And because I had ever been a lover of them and of their tongue, my ears were opened to understand them, though they spoke not Greek as we read it. Now when I had beheld many of the marvels of the Fortunate Islands, and had sat at meat with those kind hosts (though I only made semblance to eat of what they placed before me), and had seen the face of Rhadamanthus of the golden hair, who is the lord of that country, my friends told me that there was come among them one of my own nation who seemed most sad and sorrowful, and they could make him no mirth. Then they carried me to a house in a grove, and all around it a fair garden, and a well in the midst.

Now stooping over the well, that he might have sight of his own face, was a most wretched man. He was pale and very meagre; he had black rings under his eyes, and his hair was long, limp, and greasy, falling over his shoulders. He was clad somewhat after the manner of the old Greeks, but his raiment was wofully ill-made and ill-girt upon him, nor did he ever seem at his ease. As soon as I beheld his sallow face I knew him for one I had seen and mocked at in the world of the living. He was a certain Figgins, and he had been honestly apprenticed to a photographer; but, being a weak and vain young fellow, he had picked up modern notions about art, the nude, plasticity,

¹ From Mr. E. Myers's *Pindar*.

and the like, in the photographer's workroom, whereby he became a weariness to the photographer and to them that sat unto him. Being dismissed from his honest employment, this chitterling must needs become a model to some painters that were near as ignorant as himself. They talked to him about the Greeks, about the antique, about Paganism, about the Renaissance, till they made him as much the child of folly as themselves. And they painted him as Antinous, as Eros, as Sleep, and I know not what, but whatever name they called him he was always the same lank-haired, dowdy, effeminate, pasty-faced photographer's young man. Then he must needs take to writing poems all about Greece, and the free ways of the old Greeks, and Lais, and Phryne, and therein he made "Aeolus" rhyme to "control us." For of Greek this fellow knew not a word, and any Greek that met him had called him a κόλλοψ, and bidden him begone to the crows for a cursed fellow, and one that made false quantities in every Greek name he uttered. But his little poems were much liked by young men of his own sort, and by some of the young women. Now death had come to Figgins, and here he was in the Fortunate Islands, the very paradise of those Greeks about whom he had always been prating while he was alive. And yet he was not happy. A little lyre lay beside him in the grass, and now and again he twanged on it dolorously, and he tried to weave himself garlands from the flowers that grew around him; but he knew not the art, and ever and anon he felt for his button-hole, wherein to stick a lily or the like. But he had no button-hole. Then he would look at himself in the well, and yawn and wish himself back in his friends' studios in London. I almost pitied the wretch, and, going up to him, I asked him how he did. He said he had never been more wretched. "Why," I asked, "was your mouth not always full of the 'Greek spirit,' and did you not mock the Christians and their religion? And, as to their heaven, did you not say that it was a tedious place, full of pious old ladies and Philistines? And are you not got to the paradise of the Greeks? What, then, ails you with your lot?" "Sir," said he, "to be plain with you, I do not understand a word these fellows about me say, and I feel as I did the first time I went to Paris, before I knew enough French to read the Master's poems.¹ Again, every one here is mirthful and gay, and there is no man with a divinely passionate potentiality of pain. When I first came here they were always asking me to run with them or jump

¹ Poor Figgins always called M. Bandelaire "the Master."

against them, and one fellow insisted I should box with him, and hurt me very much. My potentiality of pain is considerable. Or they would have me drive with them in these dangerous open chariots—me, that never rode in a hansom cab without feeling nervous. And after dinner they sing songs of which I do not catch the meaning of one syllable, and the music is like nothing I ever heard in my life. And they are all abominably active and healthy. And such of their poets as I admired—in Bohn's cribs, of course—the poets of the Anthology, are not here at all, and the poets who are here are tremendous proud toffs " (here Figgins relapsed into his natural style as it was before he became a Neopagan poet), " and won't say a word to a cove. And I'm sick of the Greeks, and the Fortunate Islands are a blooming fraud, and oh, for paradise, give me Pentonville." With these words, perhaps the only unaffected expression of genuine sentiment poor Figgins had ever uttered, he relapsed into a gloomy silence. I advised him to cultivate the society of the authors whose selected works are in the Greek Delectus, and to try to make friends with Xenophon, whose Greek is about as easy as that of any ancient. But I fear that Figgins, like the Rev. Peter McSnadden, is really suffering a kind of punishment in the disguise of a reward, and all through having accidentally found his way into what he foolishly thought would be the right paradise for him.

Now I might have stayed long in the Fortunate Islands, yet, beautiful as they were, I ever felt like Odysseus in the island of fair Circe. The country was lovely and the land desirable, but the Christian souls were not there without whom heaven itself were no paradise to me. And it chanced that as we sat at the feast a maiden came to me with a pomegranate on a plate of silver, and said, " Sir, thou hast now been here for the course of a whole moon, yet hast neither eaten nor drunk of what is set before thee. Now it is commanded that thou must taste if it were but a seed of this pomegranate, or depart from among us." Then, making such excuses as I might, I was constrained to refuse to eat, for no soul can leave a paradise wherein it has tasted food. And as I spoke the walls of the fair hall wherein we sat, which were painted with the effigies of them that fell at Thermopylæ and in Arcadion, wavered and grew dim, and darkness came upon me.

The first of my senses which returned to me was that of smell, and I seemed almost drowned in the spicy perfumes of Araby. Then my eyes became aware of a green soft fluttering, as of the leaves of a great forest, but quickly I perceived that the fluttering was caused

by the green scarfs of a countless multitude of women. They were "fine women" in the popular sense of the term, and were of the school of beauty admired by the Faithful of Islam, and known to Mr. Bailey, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, as "crumby." These fond attendant nymphs carried me into gardens twain, in each two gushing springs, in each fruit, and palms, and pomegranates. There were the blessed reclining, precisely as the Prophet has declared, "on beds the linings whereof are brocade, and the fruit of the two gardens within reach to cull." There also were the "maids of modest glances," previously indifferent to the wooing "of man or ginn." "Bright and large-eyed maids kept in their tents, reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets. About the golden couches went eternal youths with goblets and ewers, and a cup of flowing wine. No headache shall they feel therefrom," says the compassionate Prophet, "nor shall their wits be dimmed." And all that land is misty and fragrant with the perfume of the softest Latakia, and the gardens are musical with the bubbling of countless *narghilés*; and I must say that to the Christian soul which enters that paradise the whole place has, certainly, a rather curious air, as of a highly transcendental Cremorne. There could be no doubt, however, that the Faithful were enjoying themselves amazingly—"right lucky fellows," as we read in the new translation of the Koran. Yet even here all was not peace and pleasantness, for I heard my name called by a small voice, in a tone of patient subdued querulousness. Looking hastily round, I with some difficulty recognised, in a green turban and silk gown to match, my old college tutor and professor of Arabic. Poor old Jones had been the best and the most shy of university men. As there was never any undergraduate in his time (it is different now) who wished to learn Arabic, his place had been a sinecure, and he had chiefly devoted his leisure to "drawing" pupils who were too late for college chapel. The sight of a lady of his acquaintance in the streets had at all times been alarming enough to drive him into a shop or up a lane, and he had not survived the creation of the first batch of married fellows. How he had got into this thoroughly wrong paradise was a mystery which he made no attempt to explain. "A nice place this, eh?" he said to me. "Nice gardens; remind me of Magdalene a good deal. It seems, however, to be decidedly rather gay just now; don't you think so? Commemoration week, perhaps. A great many young ladies up, certainly; a good deal of cup drunk in the gardens too. I always did prefer to go down in Commemoration

week, myself ; never was a dancing man. There is a great deal of dancing here, but the young ladies dance alone, rather like what is called the *ballet*, I believe, at the opera. I must say the young persons are a little forward ; a little embarrassing it is to be alone here, especially as I have forgotten a good deal of my Arabic. Don't you think, my dear fellow, you and I could manage to give them the slip ? Run away from them, eh ? " He uttered a timid little chuckle, and at that moment an innumerable host of houris began a *ballet d'action* illustrative of a series of events in the career of the Prophet. It was obvious that my poor uncomplaining old friend was really very miserable. The " thornless lote-trees " were all thorny to him, and the " tal'h-trees with piles of fruit, the outspread shade, and water outpoured " could not comfort him in his really very natural shyness. A happy thought occurred to me. In early and credulous youth I had studied the works of Cornelius Agrippa and Petrus de Abano. Their lessons, which had not hitherto been of much practical service, recurred to my mind. Stooping down, I drew a circle round myself and my old friend in the fragrant white blossoms which were strewn so thick that they quite hid the grass. This circle I fortified by the usual signs employed, as Benvenuto Cellini tells us, in the conjuration of evil spirits. I then proceeded to utter one of the common forms of exorcism. Instantly the myriad houris assumed the forms of irritated demons ; the smoke from the uncounted *narghilés* burned thick and black ; the cries of the frustrated *ginns*, who were no better than they should be, rang wildly in our ears ; the palm-trees shook beneath a mighty wind ; the distant summits of the minarets rocked and wavered, and, with a tremendous crash, the paradise of the Faithful disappeared.

As I rang the bell, and requested the club-waiter to carry away the smoking fragments of the moderator-lamp which I had accidentally knocked over in awaking from my nightmare, I reflected on the vanity of men and the unsubstantial character of the future homes that their fancy has fashioned. The ideal heavens of modern poets and novelists, and of ancient priests, come no nearer than the drugged dreams of the angekok and the biraark of Greenland and Queensland to that rest and peace whereof it has not entered into the mind of man to conceive. To the wrong man each of our pictured heavens would be a hell, and even to the appropriate devotee each would become a tedious purgatory.

DR. JOHN CHALMERS

THE MOUNTAIN TORRENT

ONE sunny afternoon in the autumn of 1868, while passing a pleasant holiday in Southern Tyrol, I found myself upon the bridge which spans the Lena a short way below the little hill town of Roveredo. In the morning I had left Trent, which combines so remarkably the arcades, colour, and other characteristics of an Italian town, with Alpine situation and surroundings ; and although it is but a dozen or so miles from Roveredo, a love for the rarer charms which by-ways afford led me, after clearing the pass of Calliano, to leave the course of the river Adige, and strike into the hills on a route which consumed the best part of the day. The weather had been sultry, and the rocky pathway leading down to the stream so steep and troublesome to traverse, that a halt upon the bridge afforded an agreeable relief to weary limbs. Here, also, burst upon the view the full grandeur of the little valley. On each side of the rapid Lena, which tumbled darkly along its broken channel to join the Adige, rose rocky banks, and pine-covered heights, stretching away upwards to be lost in the distant chain of snow-capped mountains, against whose white summits rose the sombre towers of the castle of Roveredo, which, standing like a sentinel upon the bank of the river above the bridge, filled up the middle distance with its majestic proportions. Leaning upon the parapet of the bridge, it was impossible not to feel that tranquillity of soul which nature never refuses to those who love her. The beauty of the spot, the air balmy with the odour of the autumn flowers, and musical with the song of birds, so numerous in Southern Tyrol, the buzzing of insects, and the murmur of water below, so soothed me into forgetfulness, that it was not until he stood by my side that I became aware of the approach of a grey-haired old peasant.

After bidding him good-day, a salutation he courteously returned, I reverted to the subject of my meditations, and asked him how long he had lived in this peaceful and happy valley.

" I have lived in this valley, sir," he replied, " ever since the French were obliged to abandon Roveredo, and that was seventy years ago.

It is a pleasant place to live in, but not always so very peaceful or so very happy. More than once in my time has the din of war been thrust upon us by our rapacious neighbours, and you may have read about the struggle of 1809, when the Tyrolese won the admiration of Europe by a contest in defence of their liberty as brave as any that history has to record."

"The river too," he added, after a short pause, and looking earnestly down upon the gurgling stream, "is quiet enough just now, but see it swollen with thunder showers or melting snow. It makes plenty of noise then, and works sad havoc to property and cattle, aye, and many a human life has been lost too when the Lena is flooded."

Observing a sad expression steal over the old man's face as if from some painful recollection, I asked him if he had ever seen any one perish in the flood?

"Aye, that I have, sir," he said, with a sorrowful shake of his head, "and at this very spot, too. But it is an old tale, and may not interest you."

"On the contrary," I replied, "I shall be only too glad to sit down and listen to your story. See, we may rest ourselves on this log. Pray be seated."

We sat down. The old man lifted his felt hat back from his brow, as if to clear his brain, rested both his hands upon his staff, and began:

"When the news reached us about the end of October 1813, that the ruthless bloodhounds of France, with the fiend Napoleon at their head, had been routed at Leipzic, and driven back in confusion towards the Rhine, the count called a gathering of his people to celebrate a victory which released them, for the time at least, from the fear of another French invasion. The tenantry attending readily to the call, assembled early in the day within the castle of Roveredo; all in good spirits and prepared to spend a merry day. One man alone was absent. Bertollo sat in his cabin a gloomy man. Although a native of Piedmont, he had joined the French forces and fought with them at the taking of our little town. During the occupation of Roveredo he somehow won the heart of a peasant's daughter here—one of the comeliest maidens in the place; married her, and occupied a cottage, which you may see standing a short distance up the stream on the bank opposite the castle.

"A passionate disposition, readiness to quarrel, together with a keen sense of the ill-feeling his exploits both in love and in war had engendered, kept him apart from his neighbours; it suited his dis-

position better to roam about spearing fish and trapping wild beasts than to attend to the wants of his home or the occupations of a peasant's life. He could be generous on occasion, and had the repute of doing many a brave service in aid of his neighbours, but steadily refused any compliment or recognition of such service. The instinct which prompted him to help those in danger, demanded no praise, and pride would not allow it. Even when he rescued the count's young brother from the tusks of an enraged boar in the wood yonder, he treated the count's gratitude with contempt."

"What an unhappy life his pretty wife must have led," I said, as the old man paused in his narration.

"Not so unhappy, neither," he replied quickly, "for Bertollo loved his wife, and watched her with a jealous care; and it was love of her and of a little bright-eyed boy, more than the chance of fighting against his old comrades in arms, that led him to evade the small band of mountaineers who left Tyrol to join the Austrians against the French invaders. Whisperings of cowardice touched him to the quick; tidings of the French overthrow added to his discomfiture; while the rejoicings at the castle, in which his part seemed so ignoble, filled his soul with wrath; and this is how, on the morning of the gathering, he sat in his cabin a gloomy man.

"You see, sir," said the old man, moralising, "how a good intention may cast a gloom upon our lives, as the heat of the sun gathers the storm-cloud around yon mountain tops.

"But," he said, proceeding with his story, "the father's rudeness did not prevent the boy becoming a favourite. The count never met him when abroad but he patted little Pedro on the head, and spoke kindly to him. This morning the little fellow was expected at the castle to join the children, and looked forward to the time with joy. The father sternly forbade his going; what did his child want at the castle? And when Pedro placed his head softly on his father's shoulder, and asked to be allowed to go just for a little to see the dancing, instead of receiving the usual kiss he was rudely repulsed and sent into the garden, sobbing bitterly.

"Then the mother spoke:

"'You carry this mood too far, Bert,' she pleaded; 'the count means nothing but kindness to us. You know he owes you a service on his brother's behalf, and he is too good to believe for a moment the foul report that you——'

“ Bertollo sprang to his feet. This allusion to a subject that had pained his heart and tortured his brain for weeks, added to the passion already raging within his breast and maddened him. He seized his wife, and would have hurled her to the ground, but a look at her fair face sent a pang of shame to his heart, and he dropped powerless on his seat, burying his face in his hand. With true womanly instinct she left him undisturbed, and moved towards the door. Here a new trouble awaited her. The boy was nowhere to be seen. Not in the garden, not on the road leading to the bridge, the whole of its extent being visible from the cottage. She saw the stream was swollen, and rushing hard and fast against the piers of the wooden structure. A glance up the river showed her the mountains hid in gloom ; and the black clouds rolling down towards the castle in large masses, from which low peals of thunder growled and rattled, and the noise of the rushing water made it plain to her that a storm had been raging on the hills which had already flooded the little river, and would soon burst over the valley.

“ For you must know, sir,” the old man paused to explain, “ that within one short hour, on as fair a day as this, I have seen a storm gather and break on these hills, and the Lena from a tiny stream rise suddenly and leap its banks, a roaring flood. This, too, had Bertollo’s wife seen, and the thought of it made her start as it flashed upon her brain that the boy might have stolen off to the castle unawares, and would attempt to cross the ford higher up. Imagine her terror on running to the hillock above the cottage, to see him arrested in his course across the stream, looking at the whirling water, and hesitating between leaping to the further stone and turning back.

“ The current rising rapidly already washed his little feet, and, covering several of the stepping-stones, made it almost equally dangerous whichever way he moved. The boy had his father’s courage but not his father’s skill, for Bertollo took to the water like the otters he hunted. The mother stood in breathless suspense : would he go on or would he leap back ? He chose to go on. He leaped and fell. The mother shrieked, for she fancied she could hear above the noise of the stream the splash of her darling boy in the water.

“ In haste she sought her husband, crying, ‘ Pedro ! Pedro is in the water ! ’

“ Bertollo, still struggling with his passion, did not offer to stir. But the mother clutched him by the arm, and with almost superhuman

strength dragged him down to the river, just in time to see the boy sweep past.

"One glance was enough. Instinctively Bertollo cleared the rocky bank at a bound, and plunged into the seething torrent. Immediately he rose close to the boy, who stretched his hands towards him. Catching Pedro with one arm, he held him tightly, while with the other he buffeted the angry water. Quick as thought his course was taken. He saw the bridge was but a hundred yards distant; immediately below a fall which would hurl to destruction the strongest swimmer; the right bank was too far away for the time at his disposal, and to attempt the left was simply to be dashed to pieces upon the steep and rugged rocks. In the middle of the stream, between him and the bridge, rose the top of a solitary rock not yet quite covered, and to reach this Bertollo exerted his full strength and skill. Straining every sinew and striking across the current, which seemed eager to sweep him past the object of his hope, he both lessened his speed, and fortunately brought himself near enough to clutch a corner of the rock, to which he clung with all the strength of despair,—the boy, silent with terror, grasping his father's neck.

"Shouts of joy burst from the people, who, hearing the screams of the boy and his distracted mother, had hurried from the castle. Among the first to stir, the count had leaped on his horse, and, galloping to the spot, was rushing about, now giving orders to his men it was impossible to obey, now encouraging Bertollo to hold on till help could come.

" 'A hundred ducats,' he cried, 'to the man who brings them safe to land. Hold on, brave Bertollo, hold on! Oh! save the boy, lads! save the boy!'

"But Bertollo felt the waves break over him higher and higher, like the arms of a greedy fiend clutching his prey, and he groaned as he found his strength, too, rapidly failing. Long before ropes or planks could be brought from the castle, a heavy rush of water swept him from his hold, and a terrible cry rent the air as man and boy once more drove down the stream. Nothing could save them now from being engulfed in the torrent below.

A gleam of hope, however, came to the drowning man at that last moment.

"Across the wooden pier of the bridge nearest the left bank, where the greatest body of the water passed, there had gathered a huge mass of such wreck as the swollen stream had carried with it—branches of

trees, straw, leaves, and pieces of timber. Towards this Bertollo strove.

"The count breathed freer, and the ashy colour left the cheek of the mother, as they saw the swimmer, impelled by the current, dash with the speed of an arrow right against this barrier. Bertollo felt the frail bridge crack and rock under the weight of the pent-up water, which rose so high as nearly to sweep its planks; and it seemed as if he had added the last straw that the old structure could bear, for as the on-lookers reached the bridge, they could see the wooden supports give way beneath their load, the rails snap, and the planks of the span he clung to bend below the water.

"There was not a moment to lose, neither was there any hesitation, for as two foresters advanced courageously from the one side, the mother, heedless of danger, advanced from the other upon the bridge. It cracked and swayed; she cared not. The angry water curled about her feet, she knew it not; the boy filled her whole thought, and stooping down, she drew him to her and caught him in her arms. Seeing her hesitate, Bertollo urged her away. She cast an imploring glance to the approaching foresters and rushed tottering towards the bank.

"With Pedro clinging mutely to her side, she fell upon her knees, and raising her hands beseechingly to heaven, sank insensible on the ground. She saw her husband no more, for scarcely had her eyes closed, than the bridge split asunder, and the bold man, hopelessly entangled in the wreck, sank in the boiling chasm."

A tear glistened in the old man's eye, and his voice quivered with emotion as he concluded his story.

"In the churchyard yonder," he said with a sigh, "you may find a stone on which is carved these words, BRAVE BERTOLLO. His wife rests by his side."

He moved sadly away.

"Stay," said I, holding his arm gently, "one who knows so well the father's fate may tell me something more of the son."

"You guess truly," he replied, "Pedro passed a long and happy life in the service of the folks at the castle, and now only waiting the time when he shall sleep beside his kindred, he finds a sad pleasure in wandering near the place where his father snatched him from the jaws of death, at the loss of his own life. I am Pedro."

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850-1894

THRAWN JANET

THE Reverend Murdoch Soulis was long minister of the moorland parish of Balweary, in the Vale of Dule. A severe, bleak-faced old man, dreadful to his hearers, he dwelt in the last years of his life, without relative or servant or any human company, in the small and lonely manse under the Hanging Shaw. In spite of the iron composure of his features, his eye was wild, scared, and uncertain ; and when he dwelt, in private admonitions, on the future of the impenitent, it seemed as if his eye pierced through the storms of time to the terrors of eternity. Many young persons, coming to prepare themselves against the season of the Holy Communion, were dreadfully affected by his talk. He had a sermon on 1 Peter, v. 8, "The devil as a roaring lion," on the Sunday after every seventeenth of August, and he was accustomed to surpass himself upon that text both by the appalling nature of the matter and the terror of his bearing in the pulpit. The children were frightened into fits, and the old looked more than usually oracular, and were, all that day, full of those hints that Hamlet deprecated. The manse itself, where it stood by the water of Dule among some thick trees, with the Shaw overhanging it on the one side, and on the other many cold, moorish hilltops rising towards the sky, had begun, at a very early period of Mr. Soulis's ministry, to be avoided in the dusk hours by all who valued themselves upon their prudence ; and guidmen sitting at the clachan alehouse shook their heads together at the thought of passing late by that uncanny neighbourhood. There was one spot, to be more particular, which was regarded with especial awe. The manse stood between the high road and the water of Dule, with a gable to each ; its back was towards the kirk-town of Balweary, nearly half a mile away, in front of it, a bare garden, hedged with thorn, occupied the land between the river and the road. The house was two storeys high, with two large rooms on each. It opened not directly on the garden, but on a causewayed path, or passage, giving on the road on the one hand, and closed on the other by the tall willows and elders that bordered on

the stream. And it was this strip of causeway that enjoyed among the young parishioners of Balweary so infamous a reputation. The minister walked there often after dark, sometimes groaning aloud in the instancy of his unspoken prayers ; and when he was from home, and the manse door was locked, the more daring schoolboys ventured, with beating hearts, to " follow my leader " across that legendary spot.

This atmosphere of terror, surrounding, as it did, a man of God of spotless character and orthodoxy, was a common cause of wonder and subject of inquiry among the few strangers who were led by chance or business into that unknown, outlying country. But many even of the people of the parish were ignorant of the strange events which had marked the first year of Mr. Soulis's ministrations ; and among those who were better informed, some were naturally reticent, and others shy of that particular topic. Now and again, only, one of the older folk would warm into courage over his third tumbler, and recount the cause of the minister's strange looks and solitary life.

Fifty years syne, when Mr. Soulis cam' first into Ba'weary, he was still a young man—a callant, the folk said—fu' o' book learnin' and grand at the exposition, but, as was natural in sae young a man, wi' nae leevin' experience in religion. The younger sort were greatly taken wi' his gifts and his gab ; but auld, concerned, serious men and women were moved even to prayer for the young man, whom they took to be a self-deceiver, and the parish that was like to be sae ill-supplied. It was before the days o' the moderates—weary fa' them ; but ill things are like guid—they baith come bit by bit, a pickle at a time ; and there were folk even then that said the Lord had left the college professors to their ain devices, an' the lads that went to study wi' them wad hae done mair and better sittin' in a peat-bog, like their forebears of the persecution, wi' a Bible under their oxter and a speerit o' prayer in their heart. There was nae doubt, onyway, but that Mr. Soulis had been ower lang at the college. He was careful and troubled for mony things besides the ae thing needful. He had a feck o' books wi' him—mair than had ever been seen before in a' that presbytery ; and a sair wark the carrier had wi' them, for they were a' like to have smoored in the Deil's Hag between this and Kilmackerlie. They were books o' divinity, to be sure, or so they ca'd them ; but the serious were o' opinion there was little service for sae mony, when the hail o' God's Word would gang in the neuk of a plaid. Then he wad

sit half the day and half the nicht forbye, which was scant decent—writin', nae less ; and first, they were feared he wad read his sermons ; and syne it proved he was writin' a book himsel', which was surely no fittin' for ane of his years an' sma' experience.

Onyway it behoved him to get an auld, decent wife to keep the manse for him an' see to his bit denners ; and he was recommended to an auld limmer—Janet M'Clour, they ca'd her—and sae far left to himsel' as to be ower persuaded. There was mony advised him to the contrar, for Janet was mair than suspekkit by the best folk in Ba'weary. Lang or that, she had had a wean to a dragoon ; she hadnae come forrit¹ for maybe thretty year ; and bairns had seen her mumblin' to hersel' up on Key's Loan in the gloamin', whilk was an unco time an' place for a Godfearin' woman. Howsoever, it was the laird himsel' that had first tauld the minister o' Janet ; and in thae days he wad have gane a far gate to plesure the laird. When folk tauld him that Janet was sib to the deil, it was a' superstition by his way of it ; an' when they cast up the Bible to him an' the witch of Endor, he wad threep it down their thrapples that thir days were a' gane by, and the deil was mercifully restrained.

Weel, when it got about the clachan that Janet M'Clour was to be servant at the manse, the folk were fair mad wi' her an' him thegether ; and some o' the guidwives had nae better to dae than get round her door cheeks and chairge her wi' a' that was kent again her, frae the sodger's bairn to John Tamson's twa kye. She was nae great speaker ; folk usually let her gang her ain gate, an' she let them gang theirs, wi' neither Fair-guid-e'en nor Fair-guid-day ; but when she buckled to, she had a tongue to deave the miller. Up she got, an' there wasnae an auld story in Ba'weary but she gart somebody lowp for it that day ; they couldnae say ae thing but she could say twa to it ; till, at the hinder end, the guidwives up and claught haud of her, and clawed the coats aff her back, and pu'd her down the clachan to the water o' Dule, to see if she were a witch or no, soum or droun. The carline skirled till ye could hear her at the Hangin' Shaw, and she focht like ten ; there was mony a guidwife bure the mark of her neist day an' mony a lang day after ; and just in the hettest o' the collieshangie, wha suld come up (for his sins) but the new minister.

"Women," said he (and he had a grand voice), "I charge you in the Lord's name to let her go."

¹ To come forrit (forward)—to offer oneself as a communicant.

Janet ran to him—she was fair wud wi' terror—an' clang to him, an' prayed him, for Christ's sake, save her frae the cummers ; an' they, for their pairt, tauld him a' that was kent, and maybe mair.

" Woman," says he to Janet, " is this true ? "

" As the Lord sees me," says she, " as the Lord made me, no a word o't. Forbye the bairn," says she, " I've been a decent woman a' my days."

" Will you," says Mr. Soulis, " in the name of God, and before me, His unworthy minister, renounce the devil and his works ? "

Weel, it wad appear that when he askit that, she gave a girn that fairly frichtit them that saw her, an' they could hear her teeth play dirl thegither in her chafts ; but there was naething for it but the ae way or the ither ; an' Janet lifted up her hand and renounced the deil before them a'.

" And now," says Mr. Soulis to the guidwives, " home with ye, one and all, and pray to God for His forgiveness."

And he gied Janet his arm, though she had little on her but a sark, and took her up the clachan to her ain door like a ledly of the land ; an' her skrieghin' and laughin' as was a scandal to be heard.

There were mony grave folk lang ower their prayers that nicht ; but when the morn cam' there was sic a fear fell upon a' Ba'weary that the bairns hid theirsels, and even the men folk stood and keekit frae their doors. For there was Janet comin' down the clachan—her or her likeness, nane could tell—wi' her neck thrawn, and her heid on ae side, like a body that has been hangit, and a girn on her face like an unstreakit corp. By an' by they got used wi' it, and even speered at her to ken what was wrang ; but frae that day forth she couldnae speak like a Christian woman, but slavered and played click wi' her teeth like a pair o' shears ; and frae that day forth the name o' God cam' never on her lips. Whiles she wad try to say it, but it michtnae be. Them that kenned best said least ; but they never gied that Thing the name o' Janet M'Clour ; for the auld Janet, by their way o't, was in muckle hell that day. But the minister was neither to haud nor to bind ; he preached about naething but the folk's cruelty that had gi'en her a stroke of the palsy, he skelpt the bairns that meddled her ; and he had her up to the manse that same nicht, and dwalled there a' his lane wi' her under the Hangin' Shaw.

Weel, time gaed by ; and the idler sort commenced to think mair lightly o' that black business. The minister was weel thocht o' ; he

was aye late at the writing, folk wad see his can'le doon by the Dule water after twal' at e'en ; and he seemed pleased wi' himsel' and upsitten as at first, though a'body could see that he was dwining. As for Janet she cam' an' she gaed ; if she didna speak muckle afore, it was reason she should speak less then ; she meddled naebody ; but she was an eldritch thing to see, an' nane wad hae mistrusted wi' her for Ba'weary glebe.

About the end o' July there cam' a spell o' weather, the like o't never was in that country-side ; it was lown an' het an' heartless ; the herds couldnae win up the Black Hill, the bairns were ower wearied to play, an' yet it was gousty too, wi' claps o' het wund that rumm'led in the glens, and bits o' shouers that slockened naething. We aye thocht it but to thun'er on the morn ; but the morn cam', an' the morn's morning, and it was aye the same uncanny weather, sair on folks and bestial. Of a' that were the waur, nane suffered like Mr. Soulis ; he could neither sleep nor eat, he tauld his elders ; an' when he wasnae writin' at his weary book, he wad be stravaguin' ower a' the country-side like a man possessed, when a'body else was blythe to keep caller ben the house.

Abune Hangin' Shaw, in the bield o' the Black Hill, there's a bit enclosed grund wi' an iron yett ; and it seems, in the auld days, that was the kirkyaird o' Ba'weary, and consecrated by the Papists before the blessed licht shone upon the kingdom. It was a great howff o' Mr. Soulis's, onyway ; there he would sit an' consider his sermons ; and indeed it's a bieldy bit. Weel, as he cam ower the wast end o' the Black Hill, ae day, he saw first twa, and syne fower, an' syne seeven corbie craws fleecin' round an' round abune the auld kirkyaird. They flew laigh and heavy, an' squawked to ither as they gaed ; and it was clear to Mr. Soulis that something had put them frae their ordinar'. He wasnae easy fleyed, an' gaed straucht up to the wa's ; an' what suld he find there but a man, or the appearance of a man, sittin' in the inside upon a grave. He was of a great stature, an' black as hell, and his een were singular to see. Mr. Soulis had heard tell o' black men, mony's the time ; but there was something unco about this black man that daunted him. Het as he was, he took a kind o' could grue in the marrow o' his banes ; but up he spak for a' that ; an' says he : " My friend, are you a stranger in this place ? " The black man answered never a word ; he got upon his feet, an' begude to hirsle to the wa' on the far side ; but he aye lookit at the

minister ; an' the minister stood an' lookit back ; till a' in a meenute the black man was ower the wa' an' rinnin' for the bield o' the trees. Mr. Soulis, he hardly kenned why, ran after him ; but he was sair for-jaskit wi' his walk an' the het, unhalesome weather, an', rin as he likit, he got nae mair than a glisk o' the black man among the birks, till he won down to the foot o' the hill-side, an' there he saw him ance mair, gaun, hap, step, an' lowp, ower Dule water to the manse.

Mr. Soulis wasnae weel pleased that this fearsome gangrel suld mak' sae free wi' Ba'weary manse ; an' he ran the harder, an', wet shoon, ower the burn, an' up the walk, but the deil a black man was there to see. He stepped out upon the road, but there was naeboddy there ; he gaed a' ower the gairden, but na, nae black man. At the hinder end, and a bit feared as was but natural, he lifted the hasp and into the manse ; and there was Janet M'Clour before his een, wi' her thrawn craig, and nane sae pleased to see him. And he aye minded sinsyne, when first he set his een upon her, he had the same cauld and deidly grue.

" Janet," says he, " have you seen a black man ? "

" A black man ? " quo' she. " Save us a' ! Ye're no wise, minister There's nae black man in a' Ba'weary."

But she didnae speak plain, ye maun understand ; but yam-yammered, like a powney wi' the bit in its moo.

" Well," says he, " Janet, if there was nae black man, I have spoken with the Accuser of the Brethren."

And he sat down like ane wi' a fever, an' his teeth chattered in his heid.

" Hoots," says she, " think shame to yoursel', minister " ; an' gied him a drap brandy that she kept aye by her.

Syne Mr. Soulis gaed into his study amang a' his books. It's a lang, laigh, mirk chalmer, perishin' cauld in winter, an' no very dry even in the tap o' the simmer, for the manse stands near the burn. Sae doun he sat, and thocht of a' that had come an' gane since he was in Ba'weary, an' his hame, an' the days when he was a bairn an' ran daffin' on the braes ; and that black man aye ran in his heid like the owercome of a sang. Aye the mair he thocht, the mair he thocht o' the black man. He tried the prayer, an' the words wouldnae come to him ; an' he tried, they say, to write at his book, but he could nae mak' nae mair o' that. There was whiles he thocht the black man was at his oxter, an' the swat stood upon him cauld as well-water ;

and there was other whiles, when he cam' to himsel' like a christened bairn and minded naething.

The upshot was that he gaed to the window an' stood glowrin' at Dule water. The trees are unco thick, an' the water lies deep an' black under the manse; an' there was Janet washin' the cla'es wi' her coats kilted. She had her back to the minister, an' he for his pairt, hardly kenned what he was lookin' at. Syne she turned round, an' shawed her face; Mr. Soulis had the same cauld grue as twice that day afore, an' it was borne in upon him what folk said, that Janet was deid lang syne, an' this was a bogle in her clay-cauld flesh. He drew back a pickle and he scanned her narrowly. She was tramp-trampin' in the cla'es, croonin' to hersel'; and eh! Gude guide us, but it was a fearsome face. Whiles she sang louder, but there was nae man born o' woman that could tell the words o' her sang; an' whiles she lookit side-lang down, but there was naething there for her to look at. There gaed a scunner through the flesh upon his banes; and that was Heeven's advertisement. But Mr. Soulis just blamed himsel', he said, to think sae ill of a puir, auld afflicted wife that hadnae a freend forbye himsel'; an' he put up a bit prayer for him and her, an' drank a little caller water—for his heart rose again the meat—an' gaed up to his naked bed in the gloaming.

That was a nicht that has never been forgotten in Ba'weary, the nicht o' the seventeenth of August, seventeen hun'er' an twal'. It had been het afore, as I hae said, but that nicht it was hetter than ever. The sun gaed doun amang unco-lookin' clouds; it fell as mirk as the pit; no a star, no a breath o' wund; ye couldnae see your han' afore your face, and even the auld folk cuist the covers frae their beds and lay pechin' for their breath. Wi' a' that he had upon his mind, it was gey and unlikely Mr. Soulis wad get muckle sleep. He lay an' he tummled; the gude, caller bed that he got into brunt his very banes; whiles he slept, and whiles he waukened; whiles he heard the time o' nicht, and whiles a tyke yowlin' up the muir, as if somebody was deid; whiles he thocht he heard bogles claverin' in his lug, an' whiles he saw spunkies in the room. He behoved, he judged, to be sick; an' sick he was—little he jaloosed the sickness.

At the hinder end, he got a clearness in his mind, sat up in his sark on the bedside, and fell thinkin' ance mair o' the black man an' Janet. He couldnae weel tell how—maybe it was the cauld to his feet—but it cam' in upon him wi' a spate that there was some connection

between thir twa, an' that either or baith o' them were bogles. And just at that moment, in Janet's room, which was neist to his, there cam' a stramp o' feet as if men were wars'lin', an' then a loud bang ; an' then a wund gaed reishling round the fower quarters of the house ; an' then a' was aince mair as seelent as the grave.

Mr. Soulis was feared for neither man nor deevil. He got his tinder-box, an' lit a can'le, an' made three steps o't ower to Janet's door. It was on the hasp, an' he pushed it open, an' keeked bauldly in. It was a big room, as big as the minister's ain, an' plenished wi' grand, auld, solid gear, for he had naething else. There was a fower-posted bed wi' auld tapestry ; and a braw cabinet of aik, that was fu' o' the minister's divinity books, an' put there to be out o' the gate ; an' a wheen duds o' Janet's lying here and there about the floor. But nae Janet could Mr. Soulis see ; nor ony sign of a contention. In he gaed (an' there's few that wad ha'e followed him) an' lookit a' round, an' listened. But there was naethin' to be heard, neither inside the manse nor in a' Ba'weary parish, an' naethin' to be seen but the muckle shadows turnin' round the can'le. An' then a' at aince, the minister's heart played dunt an' stood stock-still ; an' a cauld wund blew amang the hairs o' his heid. Whaten a weary sicht was that for the puir man's een ! For there was Janet hangin' frae a nail beside the auld aik cabinet ; her heid aye lay on her shouther, her een were steeked, the tongue projekit frae her mouth, and her heels were twa feet clear abune the floor.

" God forgive us all ! " thocht Mr. Soulis ; " poor Janet's dead."

He cam' a step nearer to the corp ; an' then his heart fair whammled in his inside. For by what cantrip it wad ill-beseem a man to judge, she was hingin' frae a single nail an' by a single wursted thread for darnin' hose.

It's an awfu' thing to be your lane at nicht wi' siccan prodigies o' darkness ; but Mr. Soulis was strong in the Lord. He turned an' gaed his ways oot o' that room, and lockit the door ahint him ; and step by step, doon the stairs, as heavy as leed ; and set doon the can'le on the table at the stairfoot. He couldnae pray, he couldnae think, he was dreepin' wi' caul' swat, an' naething could he hear but the dunt-dunt-duntin' o' his ain heart. He micht maybe have stood there an hour, or maybe twa, he minded sae little ; when a' o' a sudden, he heard a laigh, uncanny steer upstairs ; a foot gaed to an' fro in the cha'mer whaur the corp was hingin' ; syne the door was opened,

though he minded weel that he had lockit it ; an' syne there was a step upon the landin', an' it seemed to him as if the corp was lookin' ower the rail and doun upon him whaur he stood.

He took up the can'le again (for he couldnae want the licht), and as saftly as ever he could, gaed straucht out o' the manse an' to the far end o' the causeway. It was aye pit-mirk ; the flame o' the can'le, when he set it on the grund, brunt steedy and clear as in the room ; naething moved, but the Dule water seepin' and sabbin' doon the glen, an' yon unhaly footstep that cam' ploddin' doun the stairs inside the manse. He kenned the foot over weel, for it was Janet's ; and at ilka step that cam' a wee thing nearer, the cauld got deeper in his vitals. He commended his soul to Him that made an' keepit him ; and " O Lord," said he, " give me strength this night to war against the powers of evil."

By this time the foot was comin' through the passage for the door ; he could hear a hand skirt along the wa', as if the fearsome thing was feelin' for its way. The saughs tossed an' maned thegither, a lang sigh cam' ower the hills, the flame o' the can'le was blawn aboot ; an' there stood the corp of Thrawn Janet, wi' her gprogram gown an' her black mutch, wi' the heid aye upon the shouther, an' the girn still upon the face o't—leevin', ye wad hae said—deid, as Mr. Soulis weel kenned—upon the threshold o' the manse.

It's a strange thing that the saul of man should be that thirled into his perishable body, but the minister saw that, an' his heart didnae break.

She didnae stand there lang ; she began to move again an' cam' slowly towards Mr. Soulis whaur he stood under the saughs. A' the life o' his body, a' the strength o' his speerit, were glowerin' frae his een. It seemed she was gaun to speak, but wanted words, an' made a sign wi' the left hand. There cam' a clap o' wund, like a cat's fuff ; oot gaed the can'le, the saughs skrieghed like folk ; an' Mr. Soulis kenned that, live or die, this was the end o't.

" Witch, beldame, devil ! " he cried, " I charge you, by the power of God, begone—if you be dead, to the grave—if you be damned, to hell."

An' at that moment the Lord's ain hand out o' the Heevens struck the Horror whaur it stood ; the auld, deid, desecrated corp o' the witch-wife, sae lang keepit frae the grave and hirsled round by deils, lowed up like a brunstane spunk and fell in ashes to the grund ; the thunder

followed, peal on dirling peal, the rairing rain upon the back o' that ; and Mr. Souliſ lowped through the garden hedge, and ran, wi' skelloch upon skelloch, for the clachan.

That same mornin', John Christie saw the black man pass the Muckle Cairn as it was chappin' six ; before eicht, he gaed by the change-house at Knockdow ; an' no lang after, Sandy M'Lellan saw him gaun linkin' down the braes frae Kilmackerlie. There's little doubt but it was him that dwalled sae lang in Janet's body ; but he was awa' at last ; and sinsyne the deil has never fashed us in Ba'weary.

But it was a sair dispensation for the minister ; lang, lang he lay ravin' in his bed ; and frae that hour to this, he was the man ye ken the day.

MARKHEIM

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

"YES," said the dealer, "our windfalls are of various kinds. Some customers are ignorant, and then I touch a dividend on my superior knowledge. Some are dishonest," and here he held up the candle, so that the light fell strongly on his visitor, "and in that case," he continued, "I profit by my virtue."

Markheim had but just entered from the daylight streets, and his eyes had not yet grown familiar with the mingled shine and darkness in the shop. At these pointed words, and before the near presence of the flame, he blinked painfully and looked aside.

The dealer chuckled. "You come to me on Christmas day," he resumed, "when you know that I am alone in my house, put up my shutters, and make a point of refusing business. Well, you will have to pay for that ; you will have to pay for my loss of time, when I should be balancing my books ; you will have to pay, besides, for a kind of manner that I remark in you to-day very strongly. I am the essence of discretion, and ask no awkward questions ; but when a customer cannot look me in the eye, he has to pay for it." The dealer once more chuckled ; and then, changing to his usual business voice, though still with a note of irony, "You can give, as usual, a clear account of how you came into the possession of the object ?" he continued. "Still your uncle's cabinet ? A remarkable collector, sir !"

And the little pale, round-shouldered dealer stood almost on tiptoe, looking over the top of his gold spectacles, and nodding his head with every mark of disbelief. Markheim returned his gaze with one of infinite pity, and a touch of horror.

"This time," said he, "you are in error. I have not come to sell, but to buy. I have no curios to dispose of ; my uncle's cabinet is bare to the wainscot ; even were it still intact, I have done well on the Stock Exchange, and should more likely add to it than otherwise, and my errand to-day is simplicity itself. I seek a Christmas present for a lady," he continued, waxing more fluent as he struck into the speech he had prepared ; "and certainly I owe you every excuse for thus disturbing you

upon so small a matter. But the thing was neglected yesterday ; I must produce my little compliment at dinner ; and, as you very well know, a rich marriage is not a thing to be neglected."

There followed a pause, during which the dealer seemed to weigh this statement incredulously. The ticking of many clocks among the curious lumber of the shop, and the faint rushing of the cabs in a near thoroughfare, filled up the interval of silence.

" Well, sir," said the dealer, " be it so. You are an old customer after all ; and if, as you say, you have the chance of a good marriage, far be it from me to be an obstacle. Here is a nice thing for a lady now," he went on, " this hand-glass—fifteenth century, warranted ; comes from a good collection, too ; but I reserve the name, in the interests of my customer, who was, just like yourself, my dear sir, the nephew and sole heir of a remarkable collector."

The dealer, while he thus ran on in his dry and biting voice, had stooped to take the object from its place ; and, as he had done so, a shock had passed through Markheim, a start both of hand and foot, a sudden leap of many tumultuous passions to the face. It passed as swiftly as it came, and left no trace beyond a certain trembling of the hand that now received the glass.

" A glass," he said hoarsely, and then paused, and repeated it more clearly. " A glass ? For Christmas ? Surely not ? "

" And why not ? " cried the dealer. " Why not a glass ? "

Markheim was looking upon him with an indefinable expression. " You ask me why not ? " he said. " Why, look here—look in it—look at yourself ! Do you like to see it ? No ! nor I—nor any man."

The little man had jumped back when Markheim had so suddenly confronted him with the mirror ; but now, perceiving there was nothing worse on hand, he chuckled. " Your future lady, sir, must be pretty hard favoured," said he.

" I ask you," said Markheim, " for a Christmas present, and you give me this—this damned reminder of years, and sins and follies—this hand-conscience ! Did you mean it ? Had you a thought in your mind ? Tell me. It will be better for you if you do. Come, tell me about yourself. I hazard a guess now, that you are in secret a very charitable man ? "

The dealer looked closely at his companion. It was very odd, Markheim did not appear to be laughing ; there was something in his face like an eager sparkle of hope, but nothing of mirth.

"What are you driving at?" the dealer asked.

"Not charitable?" returned the other, gloomily. "Not charitable; not pious; not scrupulous; unloving, unbeloved; a hand to get money, a safe to keep it. Is that all? Dear God, man, is that all?"

"I will tell you what it is," began the dealer, with some sharpness, and then broke off again into a chuckle. "But I see this is a love-match of yours, and you have been drinking the lady's health."

"Ah!" cried Markheim, with a strange curiosity. "Ah, have you been in love? Tell me about that."

"I!" cried the dealer. "I in love! I never had the time, nor have I the time to-day for all this nonsense. Will you take the glass?"

"Where is the hurry?" returned Markheim. "It is very pleasant to stand here talking; and life is so short and insecure that I would not hurry away from any pleasure—no, not even from so mild a one as this. We should rather cling, cling to what little we can get, like a man at a cliff's edge. Every second is a cliff, if you think upon it—a cliff a mile high—high enough, if we fall, to dash us out of every feature of humanity. Hence it is best to talk pleasantly. Let us talk of each other; why should we wear this mask? Let us be confidential. Who knows, we might become friends?"

"I have just one word to say to you," said the dealer. "Either make your purchase, or walk out of my shop."

"True, true," said Markheim. "Enough fooling. To business. Show me something else."

The dealer stooped once more, this time to replace the glass upon the shelf, his thin blond hair falling over his eyes as he did so. Markheim moved a little nearer, with one hand in the pocket of his greatcoat; he drew himself up and filled his lungs; at the same time many different emotions were depicted together on his face—terror, horror, and resolve, fascination and a physical repulsion; and through a haggard lift of his upper lip, his teeth looked out.

"This, perhaps, may suit," observed the dealer; and then, as he began to re-arise, Markheim bounded from behind upon his victim. The long, skewerlike dagger flashed and fell. The dealer struggled like a hen, striking his temple on the shelf, and then tumbled on the floor in a heap.

Time had some score of small voices in that shop, some stately and slow as was becoming to their great age; others garrulous and hurried. All these told out the seconds in an intricate chorus of tickings. Then

the passage of a lad's feet, heavily running on the pavement, broke in upon these smaller voices and startled Markheim into the consciousness of his surroundings. He looked about him awfully. The candle stood on the counter, its flame solemnly wagging in a draught ; and by that inconsiderable movement, the whole room was filled with noiseless bustle and kept heaving like a sea : the tall shadows nodding, the gross blots of darkness swelling and dwindling as with respiration, the faces of the portraits and the china gods changing and wavering like images in water. The inner door stood ajar, and peered into that leaguer of shadows with a long slit of daylight like a pointing finger.

From these fear-stricken roving, Markheim's eyes returned to the body of his victim, where it lay both humped and sprawling, incredibly small and strangely meaner than in life. In these poor, miserly clothes, in that ungainly attitude, the dealer lay like so much sawdust. Markheim had feared to see it, and, lo ! it was nothing. And yet, as he gazed, this bundle of old clothes and pool of blood began to find eloquent voices. There it must lie ; there was none to work the cunning hinges or direct the miracle of locomotion—there it must lie till it was found. Found ! ay, and then ? Then would this dead flesh lift up a cry that would ring over England, and fill the world with the echoes of pursuit. Ay, dead or not, this was still the enemy. " Time was that when the brains were out," he thought ; and the first word struck into his mind. Time, now that the deed was accomplished—time, which had closed for the victim, had become instant and momentous for the slayer.

The thought was yet in his mind, when, first one and then another with every variety of pace and voice—one deep as the bell from a cathedral turret, another ringing on its treble notes the prelude of a waltz—the clocks began to strike the hour of three in the afternoon.

The sudden outbreak of so many tongues in that dumb chamber staggered him. He began to bestir himself, going to and fro with the candle, beleaguered by moving shadows, and startled to the soul by chance reflections. In many rich mirrors, some of home designs, some from Venice or Amsterdam, he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies ; his own eyes met and detected him ; and the sound of his own steps, lightly as they fell, vexed the surrounding quiet. And still as he continued to fill his pockets, his mind accused him, with a sickening iteration, of the thousand faults of his design. He should have chosen a more quiet hour ; he should have prepared an alibi ; he

should not have used a knife ; he should have been more cautious, and only bound and gagged the dealer, and not killed him ; he should have been more bold, and killed the servant also ; he should have done all things otherwise ; poignant regrets, weary, incessant toiling of the mind to change what was unchangeable, to plan what was now useless, to be the architect of the irrevocable past. Meanwhile, and behind all this activity, brute terrors, like the scurrying of rats in a deserted attic, filled the more remote chambers of his brain with riot ; the hand of the constable would fall heavy on his shoulder, and his nerves would jerk like a hooked fish ; or he beheld, in galloping defile, the dock, the prison, the gallows, and the black coffin.

Terror of the people in the street sat down before his mind like a besieging army. It was impossible, he thought, but that some rumour of the struggle must have reached their ears and set on edge their curiosity ; and now, in all the neighbouring houses, he divined them sitting motionless and with uplifted ear—solitary people, condemned to spend Christmas dwelling alone on memories of the past, and now startingly recalled from that tender exercise ; happy family parties, struck into silence round the table, the mother still with raised finger : every degree and age and humour, but all, by their own hearths, prying and hearkening and weaving the rope that was to hang him. Sometimes it seemed to him he could not move too softly ; the clink of the tall Bohemian goblets rang out loudly like a bell ; and alarmed by the bigness of the ticking, he was tempted to stop the clocks. And then, again, with a swift transition of his terrors, the very silence of the place appeared a source of peril, and a thing to strike and freeze the passer-by ; and he would step more boldly, and bustle aloud among the contents of the shop, and imitate, with elaborate bravado, the movements of a busy man at ease in his own house.

But he was now so pulled about by different alarms that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy. One hallucination in particular took a strong hold on his credulity. The neighbour hearkening with white face beside his window, the passer-by arrested by a horrible surmise on the pavement—these could at worst suspect, they could not know ; through the brick walls and shuttered windows only sounds could penetrate. But here, within the house, was he alone ? He knew he was ; he had watched the servant set forth sweethearting, in her poor best, “ out for the day ” written in every ribbon and smile. Yes, he was alone, of

course ; and yet, in the bulk of empty house about him, he could surely hear a stir of delicate footing—he was surely conscious, inexplicably conscious of some presence. Ay, surely ; to every room and corner of the house his imagination followed it ; and now it was a faceless thing, and yet had eyes to see with ; and again it was a shadow of himself ; and yet again beheld the image of the dead dealer, re-inspired with cunning and hatred.

At times, with a strong effort, he would glance at the open door which still seemed to repel his eyes. The house was tall, the skylight small and dirty, the day blind with fog ; and the light that filtered down to the ground storey was exceedingly faint, and showed dimly on the threshold of the shop. And yet, in that strip of doubtful brightness, did there not hang wavering a shadow ?

Suddenly, from the street outside, a very jovial gentleman began to beat with a staff on the shop-door, accompanying his blows with shouts and railleries in which the dealer was continually called upon by name. Markheim, smitten into ice, glanced at the dead man. But no ! he lay quite still ; he was fled away far beyond ear-shot of these blows and shoutings ; he was sunk beneath seas of silence ; and his name, which would once have caught his notice above the howling of a storm, had become an empty sound. And presently the jovial gentleman desisted from his knocking and departed.

Here was a broad hint to hurry what remained to be done, to get forth from this accusing neighbourhood, to conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the other side of day, that haven of safety and apparent innocence—his bed. One visitor had come : at any moment another might follow and be more obstinate. To have done the deed, and yet not to reap the profit, would be too abhorrent a failure. The money, that was now Markheim's concern ; and as a means to that, the keys.

He glanced over his shoulder at the open door, where the shadow was still lingering and shivering ; and with no conscious repugnance of the mind, yet with a tremor of the belly, he drew near the body of his victim. The human character had quite departed. Like a suit half-stuffed with bran, the limbs lay scattered, the trunk doubled, on the floor ; and yet the thing repelled him. Although so dingy and inconsiderable to the eye, he feared it might have more significance to the touch. He took the body by the shoulders, and turned it on its back. It was strangely light and supple, and the limbs, as if they had been

broken, fell into the oddest postures. The face was robbed of all expression ; but it was as pale as wax, and shockingly smeared with blood about one temple. That was, for Markheim, the one displeasing circumstance. It carried him back, upon the instant, to a certain fair day in a fishers' village : a grey day, a piping wind, a crowd upon the street, the blare of brasses, the booming of drums, the nasal voice of a ballad-singer ; and a boy going to and fro, buried over head in the crowd and divided between interest and fear, until, coming out upon the chief place of concourse, he beheld a booth and a great screen with pictures, dismally designed, garishly coloured : Brownrigg with her apprentice ; the Mannings with their murdered guest ; Weare in the death-grip of Thurtell ; and a score besides of famous crimes. The thing was as clear as an illusion ; he was once again that little boy ; he was looking once again, and with the same sense of physical revolt, at these vile pictures ; he was still stunned by the thumping of the drums. A bar of that day's music returned upon his memory ; and at that, for the first time, a qualm came over him, a breath of nausea, a sudden weakness of the joints, which he must instantly resist and conquer.

He judged it more prudent to confront than to flee from these considerations ; looking the more hardily in the dead face, bending his mind to realise the nature and greatness of his crime. So little a while ago that face had moved with every change of sentiment, that pale mouth had spoken, that body had been all on fire with governable energies ; and now, and by his act, that piece of life had been arrested, as the horologist, with interjected finger, arrests the beating of the clock. So he reasoned in vain ; he could rise to no more remorseful consciousness ; the same heart which had shuddered before the painted effigies of crime, looked on its reality unmoved. At best, he felt a gleam of pity for one who had been endowed in vain with all those faculties that can make the world a garden of enchantment, one who had never lived and who was now dead. But of penitence, no, not a tremor.

With that, shaking himself clear of these considerations, he found the keys and advanced towards the open door of the shop. Outside, it had begun to rain smartly ; and the sound of the shower upon the roof had banished silence. Like some dripping cavern, the chambers of the house were haunted by an incessant echoing, which filled the ear and mingled with the ticking of the clocks. And, as Markheim approached the door, he seemed to hear, in answer to his own cautious tread, the steps of another foot withdrawing up the stair. The shadow

still palpitated loosely on the threshold. He threw a ton's weight of resolve upon his muscles, and drew back the door.

The faint, foggy daylight glimmered dimly on the bare floor and stairs ; on the bright suit of armour posted, halbert in hand, upon the landing ; and on the dark wood-carvings, and framed pictures that hung against the yellow panels of the wainscot. So loud was the beating of the rain through all the house that, in Markheim's ears, it began to be distinguished into many different sounds. Footsteps and sighs, the tread of regiments marching in the distance, the chink of money in the counting, and the creaking of doors held stealthily ajar, appeared to mingle with the patter of the drops upon the cupola and the gushing of the water in the pipes. The sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences. He heard them moving in the upper chambers ; from the shop, he heard the dead man getting to his legs ; and as he began with a great effort to mount the stairs, feet fled quietly before him and followed stealthily behind. If he were but deaf, he thought, how tranquilly he would possess his soul ! And then again, and hearkening with ever fresh attention, he blessed himself for that unresting sense which held the outposts and stood a trusty sentinel upon his life. His head turned continually on his neck ; his eyes, which seemed starting from their orbits, scouted on every side, and on every side were half-rewarded as with the tail of something nameless vanishing. The four-and-twenty-steps to the first floor were four-and-twenty agonies.

On that first storey, the doors stood ajar, three of them like three ambushes, shaking his nerves like the throats of cannon. He could never again, he felt, be sufficiently immured and fortified from men's observing eyes ; he longed to be home, girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes. and invisible to all but God. And at that thought he wondered a little, recollecting tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers. It was not so, at least, with him. He feared the laws of nature, lest, in their callous and immutable procedure, they should preserve some damning evidence of his crime. He feared tenfold more, with a slavish, superstitious terror, some scission in the continuity of man's experience, some wilful illegality of nature. He played a game of skill, depending on the rules, calculating consequence from cause ; and what if nature, as the defeated tyrant overthrew the chess-board, should break 'he mould of

their succession? The like had befallen Napoleon (so writers said) when the winter changed the time of its appearance. The like might befall Markheim: the solid walls might become transparent and reveal his doings like those of bees in a glass hive; the stout planks might yield under his foot like quicksands and detain him in their clutch; ay, and there were soberer accidents that might destroy him: if, for instance, the house should fall and imprison him beside the body of his victim; or the house next door should fly on fire, and the firemen invade him from all sides. These things he feared; and, in a sense, these things might be called the hands of God reached forth against sin. But about God himself he was at ease; his act was doubtless exceptional, but so were his excuses, which God knew; it was there, and not among men, that he felt sure of justice.

When he had got safe into the drawing-room, and shut the door behind him, he was aware of a respite from alarms. The room was quite dismantled, uncarpeted besides, and strewn with packing-cases and incongruous furniture; several great pier-glasses, in which he beheld himself at various angles, like an actor on a stage; many pictures, framed and unframed, standing, with their faces to the wall; a fine Sheraton sideboard, a cabinet of marquetry, and a great old bed, with tapestry hangings. The windows opened to the floor; but by great good fortune the lower part of the shutters had been closed, and this concealed him from the neighbours. Here, then, Markheim drew in a packing-case before the cabinet, and began to search among the keys. It was a long business, for there were many; and it was irksome, besides; for, after all, there might be nothing in the cabinet, and time was on the wing. But the closeness of the occupation sobered him. With the tail of his eye he saw the door—even glanced at it from time to time directly, like a besieged commander pleased to verify the good estate of his defences. But in truth he was at peace. The rain falling in the street sounded natural and pleasant. Presently, on the other side, the notes of a piano were wakened to the music of a hymn, and the voices of many children took up the air and words. How stately, how comfortable was the melody! How fresh the youthful voices! Markheim gave ear to it smilingly, as he sorted out the keys; and his mind was thronged with answerable ideas and images; church-going children and the pealing of the high organ; children afield, bathers by the brookside, ramblers on the brambly common, kite-flyers in the windy and cloud-navigated sky; and then, at another cadence of the

hymn, back again to church, and the somnolence of summer Sundays, and the high genteel voice of the parson (which he smiled a little to recall) and the painted Jacobean tombs, and the dim lettering of the Ten Commandments in the chancel.

And as he sat thus, at once busy and absent, he was startled to his feet. A flash of ice, a flash of fire, a bursting gush of blood, went over him, and then he stood transfixed and thrilling. A step mounted the stair slowly and steadily, and presently a hand was laid upon the knob, and the lock clicked, and the door opened.

Fear held Markheim in a vice. What to expect he knew not, whether the dead man walking, or the official ministers of human justice, or some chance witness blindly stumbling in to consign him to the gallows. But when a face was thrust into the aperture, glanced round the room, looked at him, nodded and smiled as if in friendly recognition, and then withdrew again, and the door closed behind it, his fear broke loose from his control in a hoarse cry. At the sound of this the visitant returned.

"Did you call me?" he asked pleasantly, and with that he entered the room and closed the door behind him.

Markheim stood and gazed at him with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the newcomer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God.

And yet the creature had a strange air of commonplace as he stood looking on Markheim with a smile; and when he added: "You are looking for the money, I believe?" it was in the tones of every-day politeness.

Markheim made no answer.

"I should warn you," resumed the other, "that the maid has left her sweetheart earlier than usual and will soon be here. If Mr. Markheim be found in this house, I need not describe to him the consequences."

"You know me?" cried the murderer.

The visitor smiled. "You have long been a favourite of mine," he said; "and I have long observed and often sought to help you."

"What are you?" cried Markheim: "the devil?"

"What I may be," returned the other, "cannot affect the service I propose to render you."

"It can," cried Markheim; "it does! Be helped by you? No, never; not by you! You do not know me yet; thank God, you do not know me!"

"I know you," replied the visitant, with a sort of kind severity or rather firmness. "I know you to the soul."

"Know me!" cried Markheim. "Who can do so? My life is but a travesty and slander on myself. I have lived to belie my nature. All men do; all men are better than this disguise that grows about and stifles them. You see each dragged away by life, like one whom bravos have seized and muffled in a cloak. If they had their own control—if you could see their faces, they would be altogether different, they would shine out for heroes and saints! I am worse than most; myself is more overlaid; my excuse is known to me and God. But, had I the time, I could disclose myself."

"To me?" inquired the visitant.

"To you before all," returned the murderer. "I supposed you were intelligent. I thought—since you exist—you would prove a reader of the heart. And yet you would propose to judge me by my acts! Think of it; my acts! I was born and I have lived in a land of giants; giants have dragged me by the wrists since I was born out of my mother—the giants of circumstance. And you would judge me by my acts! But can you not look within? Can you not understand that evil is hateful to me? Can you not see within me the clear writing of conscience, never blurred by any wilful sophistry, although too often disregarded? Can you not read me for a thing that surely must be common as humanity—the unwilling sinner?"

"All this is very feelingly expressed," was the reply, "but it regards me not. These points of consistency are beyond my province, and I care not in the least by what compulsion you may have been dragged away, so as you are but carried in the right direction. But time flies; the servant delays, looking in the faces of the crowd and at the pictures on the hoardings, but still she keeps moving nearer; and remember, it is as if the gallows itself were striding towards you through the Christmas streets! Shall I help you; I, who know all? Shall I tell you where to find the money?"

"For what price?" asked Markheim.

"I offer you the service for a Christmas gift," returned the other

Markheim could not refrain from smiling with a kind of bitter triumph. "No," said he, "I will take nothing at your hands; if I were dying of thirst, and it was your hand that put the pitcher to my lips, I should find the courage to refuse. It may be credulous, but I will do nothing to commit myself to evil."

"I have no objection to a death-bed repentance," observed the visitant.

"Because you disbelieve their efficacy!" Markheim cried.

"I do not say so," returned the other; "but I look on these things from a different side, and when the life is done my interest falls. The man has lived to serve me, to spread black looks under colour of religion, or to sow tares in the wheat-field, as you do, in a course of weak compliance with desire. Now that he draws so near to his deliverance, he can add but one act of service—to repent, to die smiling, and thus to build up in confidence and hope the more timorous of my surviving followers. I am not so hard a master. Try me. Accept my help. Please yourself in life as you have done hitherto; please yourself more amply, spread your elbows at the board; and when the night begins to fall and the curtains to be drawn, I tell you, for your greater comfort, that you will find it even easy to compound your quarrel with your conscience, and to make a truckling peace with God. I came but now from such a death-bed, and the room was full of sincere mourners, listening to the man's last words: and when I looked into that face, which had been set as a flint against mercy, I found it smiling with hope."

"And do you, then, suppose me such a creature?" asked Markheim. "Do you think I have no more generous aspirations than to sin, and sin, and sin, and, at last, sneak into heaven? My heart rises at the thought. Is this, then, your experience of mankind? or is it because you find me with red hands that you presume such baseness? and is this crime of murder indeed so impious as to dry up the very springs of good?"

"Murder is to me no special category," replied the other. "All sins are murder, even as all life is war. I behold your race, like starving mariners on a raft, plucking crusts out of the hands of famine and feeding on each other's lives. I follow sins beyond the moment of their acting; I find in all that the last consequence is death; and to my eyes, the pretty maid who thwarts her mother with such taking graces on a question of a ball, drips no less visibly with human gore than

such a murderer as yourself. Do I say that I follow sins ? I follow virtues also ; they differ not by the thickness of a nail, they are both scythes for the reaping angel of Death. Evil, for which I live, consists not in action, but in character. The bad man is dear to me ; not the bad act, whose fruits, if we could follow them far enough down the hurtling cataract of the ages, might yet be found more blessed than those of the rarest virtues. And it is not because you have killed a dealer, but because you are Markheim, that I offered to forward your escape."

"I will lay my heart open to you," answered Markheim. "This crime on which you find me is my last. On my way to it I have learned many lessons ; itself is a lesson, a momentous lesson. Hitherto I have been driven with revolt to what I would not ; I was a bond-slave to poverty, driven and scourged. There are robust virtues that can stand in these temptations ; mine was not so : I had a thirst of pleasure. But to-day, and out of this deed, I pluck both warning and riches—both the power and a fresh resolve to be myself. I become in all things a free actor in the world ; I begin to see myself all change these hands the agents of good, this heart at peace. Something comes over me out of the past ; something of what I have dreamed on Sabbath evenings to the sound of the church organ, of what I forecast when I shed tears over noble books, or talked, an innocent child, with my mother. There lies my life ; I have wandered a few years, but now I see once more my city of destination."

"You are to use this money on the Stock Exchange, I think ?" remarked the visitor ; "and there, if I mistake not, you have already lost some thousands ?"

"Ah," said Markheim, "but this time I have a sure thing."

"This time, again, you will lose," replied the visitor quietly.

"Ah, but I keep back the half !" cried Markheim.

"That also you will lose," said the other.

The sweat started upon Markheim's brow. "Well, then, what matter ?" he exclaimed. "Say it be lost, say I am plunged again in poverty, shall one part of me, and that the worse, continue until the end to override the better ? Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways. I do not love the one thing, I love all. I can conceive great deeds, renunciations, martyrdoms ; and though I be fallen to such a crime as murder, pity is no stranger to my thoughts. I pity the poor ; who knows their trials better than myself ? I pity and help

them ; I prize love, I love honest laughter ; there is no good thing nor true thing on earth but I love it from my heart. And are my vices only to direct my life, and my virtues to lie without effect, like some passive lumber of the mind ? Not so ; good, also, is a spring of acts."

But the visitant raised his finger. " For six-and-thirty years that you have been in this world," said he, " through many changes of fortune and varieties of humour, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blenched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness, from which you still recoil ?—five years from now I shall detect you in the fact ! Downward, downward, lies your way ; nor can anything but death avail to stop you."

" It is true," Markheim said huskily, " I have in some degree complied with evil. But it is so with all : the very saints, in the mere exercise of living, grow less dainty, and take on the tone of their surroundings."

" I will propound to you one simple question," said the other ; " and as you answer, I shall read to you your moral horoscope. You have grown in many things more lax ; possibly you do right to be so ; and at any account, it is the same with all men. But granting that, are you in any one particular, however trifling, more difficult to please with your own conduct, or do you go in all things with a looser rein ? "

" In any one ? " repeated Markheim, with an anguish of consideration. " No," he added, with despair, " in none ! I have gone down in all."

" Then," said the visitor, " content yourself with what you are, for you will never change ; and the words of your part on this stage are irrevocably written down."

Markheim stood for a long while silent, and indeed it was the visitor who first broke the silence. " That being so," he said, " shall I show you the money ? "

" And grace ? " cried Markheim.

" Have you not tried it ? " returned the other. " Two or three years ago, did I not see you on the platform of revival meetings, and was not your voice the loudest in the hymn ? "

" It is true," said Markheim ; " and I see clearly what remains for me by way of duty. I thank you for these lessons from my soul ; my eyes are opened, and I behold myself at last for what I am."

At this moment, the sharp note of the door-bell rang through the

house ; and the visitant, as though this were some concerted signal for which he had been waiting, changed at once in his demeanour.

"The maid !" he cried. "She has returned, as I forewarned you, and there is now before you one more difficult passage. Her master, you must say, is ill ; you must let her in, with an assured but rather serious countenance—no smiles, no overacting, and I promise you success ! Once the girl within, and the door closed, the same dexterity that has already rid you of the dealer will relieve you of this last danger in your path. Thenceforward you have the whole evening—the whole night, if needful—to ransack the treasures of the house and to make good your safety. This is help that comes to you with the mask of danger. Up !" he cried : "up, friend ; your life hangs trembling in the scales : up, and act !"

Markheim steadily regarded his counsellor. "If I be condemned to evil acts," he said, "there is still one door of freedom open—I can cease from action. If my life be an ill thing, I can lay it down. Though I be, as you say truly, at the beck of every small temptation, I can yet, by one decisive gesture, place myself beyond the reach of all. My love of good is damned to barrenness ; it may, and let it be ! But I have still my hatred of evil ; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change : they brightened and softened with a tender triumph ; and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned. But Markheim did not pause to watch or understand the transformation. He opened the door and went downstairs very slowly, thinking to himself. His past went soberly before him ; he beheld it as it was, ugly and strenuous like a dream, random as chance-medley—a scene of defeat. Life, as he thus reviewed it, tempted him no longer ; but on the farther side he perceived a quiet haven for his bark. He paused in the passage, and looked into the shop, where the candle still burned by the dead body. It was strangely silent. Thoughts of the dealer swarmed into his mind, as he stood gazing. And then the bell once more broke out into impatient clamour.

He confronted the maid upon the threshold with something like a smile.

"You had better go for the police," said he : "I have killed your master."

WILL O' THE MILL

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

THE PLAIN AND THE STARS

THE Mill where Will lived with his adopted parents stood in a falling valley between pinewoods and great mountains. Above, hill after hill soared upwards until they soared out of the depth of the hardest timber, and stood naked against the sky. Some way up, a long grey village lay like a seam or a rag of vapour on a wooded hillside ; and when the wind was favourable, the sound of the church bells would drop down, thin and silvery, to Will. Below, the valley grew ever steeper and steeper, and at the same time widened out on either hand ; and from an eminence beside the mill it was possible to see its whole length and away beyond it over a wide plain, where the river turned and shone, and moved on from city to city on the voyage towards the sea. It chanced that over this valley there lay a pass into a neighbouring kingdom ; so that, quiet and rural as it was, the road that ran along beside the river was a high thoroughfare between two splendid and powerful societies. All through the summer, travelling-carriages came crawling up, or went plunging briskly downwards past the mill ; and as it happened that the other side was very much easier of ascent, the path was not much frequented, except by people going in one direction ; and of all the carriages that Will saw go by, five-sixths were plunging briskly downwards and only one-sixth crawling up. Much more was this the case with foot-passengers. All the light-footed tourists, all the pedlars laden with strange wares, were tending downward like the river that accompanied their path. Nor was this all ; for when Will was yet a child a disastrous war arose over a great part of the world. The newspapers were full of defeats and victories, the earth rang with cavalry hoofs, and often for days together and for miles around the coil of battle terrified good people from their labours in the field. Of all this, nothing was heard for a long time in the valley ; but at last one of the commanders pushed an army over the pass by forced marches, and for three days horse and foot, cannon and tumbril, drum and standard, kept pouring downward

past the mill. All day the child stood and watched them on their passage—the rhythmical stride, the pale, unshaven faces tanned about the eyes, the discoloured regimentals and the tattered flags, filled him with a sense of weariness, pity, and wonder ; and all night long, after he was in bed, he could hear the cannon pounding and the feet trampling, and the great armament sweeping onward and downward past the mill. No one in the valley ever heard the fate of the expedition, for they lay out of the way of gossip in those troublous times ; but Will saw one thing plainly, that not a man returned. Whither had they all gone ? Whither went all the tourists and pedlars with strange wares ? Whither all the brisk barouches with servant in the dicky ? Whither the water of the stream, ever coursing downward and ever renewed from above ? Even the wind blew oftener down the valley, and carried the dead leaves along with it in the fall. It seemed like a great conspiracy of things animate and inanimate ; they all went downward, fleetly and gaily downward, and only he, it seemed, remained behind, like a stock upon the wayside. It sometimes made him glad when he noticed how the fishes kept their heads up stream. They, at least, stood faithfully by him, while all else were posting downward to the unknown world.

One evening he asked the miller where the river went.

“ It goes down the valley,” answered he, “ and turns a power of mills—six score mills, they say, from here to Unterdeck—and is none the wearier after all. And then it goes out into the lowlands, and waters the great corn country, and runs through a sight of fine cities (so they say) where kings live all alone in great palaces, with a sentry walking up and down before the door. And it goes under bridges with stone men upon them, looking down and smiling so curious at the water, and living folks leaning their elbows on the wall and looking over too. And then it goes on and on, and down through marshes and sands, until at last it falls into the sea, where the ships are that bring parrots and tobacco from the Indies. Ay, it has a long trot before it as it goes singing over our weir, bless its heart ! ”

“ And what is the sea ? ” asked Will.

“ The sea ! ” cried the miller. “ Lord help us all, it is the greatest thing God made ! That is where all the water in the world runs down into a great salt lake. There it lies, as flat as my hand and as innocent as a child ; but they do say when the wind blows it gets up into water-mountains bigger than any of ours, and swallows down great ships

bigger than our mill, and makes such a roaring that you can hear it miles away upon the land. There are great fish in it five times bigger than a bull, and one old serpent as long as our river and as old as all the world, with whiskers like a man, and a crown of silver on her head."

Will thought he had never heard anything like this, and he kept on asking question after question about the world that lay away down the river, with all its perils and marvels, until the old miller became quite interested himself, and at last took him by the hand and led him to the hill-top that overlooks the valley and the plain. The sun was near setting, and hung low down in a cloudless sky. Everything was defined and glorified in golden light. Will had never seen so great an expanse of country in his life ; he stood and gazed with all his eyes. He could see the cities, and the river, and far away to where the rim of the plain trenched along the shining heavens. An overmastering emotion seized upon the boy, soul and body ; his heart beat so thickly that he could not breathe ; the scene swam before his eyes ; the sun seemed to wheel round and round and throw off, as it turned, strange shapes which disappeared with the rapidity of thought, and were succeeded by others.

Will covered his face with his hands, and burst into a violent fit of tears ; and the poor miller, sadly disappointed and perplexed, saw nothing better for it than to take him up in his arms and carry him home in silence.

From that day forward Will was full of new hopes and longings. Something kept tugging at his heartstrings ; the running water carried his desires along with it as he dreamed over its fleeting surface ; the wind, as it ran over innumerable tree-tops, hailed him with encouraging words ; branches beckoned downward ; the open road, as it shouldered round the angles and went turning and vanishing fast and faster down the valley, tortured him with solicitations. He spent long whiles on the eminence, looking down the rivershed and abroad, on the fat lowlands, and watched the clouds that travelled forth upon the sluggish wind and trailed their purple shadows on the plain ; or he would linger by the wayside, and follow the carriages with his eyes as they rattled downward by the river. It did not matter what it was ; everything that went that way, were it cloud or carriage, bird or brown water in the stream, he felt his heart flow out after it in an ecstasy of longing.

We are told by men of science that all the ventures of mariners on the sea, all the counter-marching of tribes and races that confounds old history with its dust and rumour, sprang from nothing more abstruse than the laws of supply and demand, and a certain natural instinct for cheap rations. To any one thinking deeply, this will seem a dull and pitiful explanation. The tribes that came swarming out of the North and East, if they were indeed pressed onward from behind by others, were drawn at the same time by the magnetic influence of the South and West. The fame of other lands had reached them ; the name of the eternal city rang in their ears ; they were not colonists, but pilgrims ; they travelled towards wine and gold and sunshine, but their hearts were set on something higher. That divine unrest, that old stinging trouble of humanity that makes all high achievements and all miserable failure, the same that spread wings with Icarus, the same that sent Columbus into the desolate Atlantic, inspired and supported these barbarians on their perilous march. There is one legend which profoundly represents their spirit, of how a flying party of these wanderers encountered a very old man shod with iron. The old man asked them whither they were going ; and they answered with one voice, " To the Eternal City ! " He looked upon them gravely. " I have sought it," he said, " over the most part of the world. Three such pairs as I now carry on my feet have I worn out upon this pilgrimage, and now the fourth is growing slender underneath my steps. And all this while I have not found the city." He turned and went his own way alone, leaving them astonished.

And yet this would scarcely parallel the intensity of Will's feeling for the plain. If he could only go far enough out there, he felt as if his eyesight would be purged and clarified, as if his hearing would grow more delicate and his very breath would come and go with luxury. He was transplanted and withering where he was ; he lay in a strange country and was sick for home. Bit by bit he pieced together broken notions of the world below : of the river, ever moving and growing until it sailed forth into the majestic ocean ; of the cities, full of brisk and beautiful people, playing fountains, bands of music, and marble palaces, and lighted up at night from end to end with artificial stars of gold ; of the great churches, wise universities, brave armies, and untold money lying stored in vaults ; of the high-flying vice that moved in the sunshine, and the stealth and swiftness of midnight murder. I have said he was sick as if for home : the figure halts. He

was like some one lying in twilit, formless pre-existence, and stretching out his hands lovingly towards many-coloured, many-sounding life. It was no wonder he was unhappy, he would go and tell the fish : they were made for their life, wished for no more than worms and running water, and a hole below a falling bank ; but he was differently designed, full of desires and aspirations, itching at the fingers, lusting with the eyes, whom the whole variegated world could not satisfy with aspects. The true life, the true bright sunshine once before he died ! to move with a jocund spirit in a golden land ! to hear the trained singers and sweet church bells, and see the holiday gardens ! " And O fish ! " he would cry, " if you would only turn your noses down-stream, you could swim so easily into the fabled waters and see the vast ships passing over your head like clouds, and hear the great waterhills making music over you all day long ! " But the fish kept looking patiently in their own direction, until Will hardly knew whether to laugh or cry.

Hitherto the traffic on the road had passed by Will, like something seen in a picture : he had perhaps exchanged salutations with a tourist, or caught sight of an old gentleman in a travelling cap at a carriage window ; but for the most part it had been a mere symbol, which he contemplated from apart and with something of a superstitious feeling. A time came at last when this was to be changed. The miller, who was a greedy man in his way, and never forewent an opportunity of honest profit, turned the millhouse into a little wayside inn, and several pieces of good fortune falling in opportunely, built stables and got the position of postmaster on the road. It now became Will's duty to wait upon people, as they sat to break their fasts in the little arbour at the top of the mill garden ; and you may be sure that he kept his ears open, and learned many new things about the outside world as he brought the omelette or the wine. Nay, he would often get into conversation with single guests, and by adroit questions and polite attention, not only gratify his own curiosity, but win the goodwill of the travellers. Many complimented the old couple on their serving-boy ; and a professor was eager to take him away with him, and have him properly educated in the plain. The miller and his wife were mightily astonished and even more pleased. They thought it a very good thing that they should have opened their inn. " You see," the old man would remark, " he has a kind of talent for a publican ; he never would have made anything else ! " And so life wagged on in

the valley, with high satisfaction to all concerned but Will. Every carriage that left the inn-door seemed to take a part of him away with it ; and when people jestingly offered him a lift, he could with difficulty command his emotion. Night after night he would dream that he was awakened by flustered servants, and that a splendid equipage waited at the door to carry him down into the plain ; night after night, until the dream, which had seemed all jollity to him at first, began to take a colour of gravity, and the nocturnal summons and waiting equipage occupied a place in his mind as something to be both feared and hoped for.

One day, when Will was about sixteen, a fat young man arrived at sunset to pass the night. He was a contented-looking fellow, with a jolly eye, and carried a knapsack. While dinner was preparing, he sat in the arbour to read a book, but as soon as he began to observe Will, the book was laid aside ; he was plainly one of those who prefer living people to people made of ink and paper. Will, on his part, although he had not been much interested in the stranger at first sight, soon began to take a great deal of pleasure in his talk, which was full of good nature and good sense, and at last conceived a great respect for his character and wisdom. They sat far into the night ; and about two in the morning Will opened his heart to the young man, and told him how he longed to leave the valley and what bright hopes he had connected with the cities of the plain. The young man whistled, and then broke into a smile.

“ My young friend,” he remarked, “ you are a very curious little fellow to be sure, and wish a great many things which you will never get. Why, you would feel quite ashamed if you knew how the little fellows in these fairy cities of yours are all after the same sort of nonsense, and keep breaking their hearts to get up into the mountains. And let me tell you, those who go down into the plains are a very short while there before they wish themselves heartily back again. The air is not so light nor so pure ; nor is the sun any brighter. As for the beautiful men and women, you would see many of them in rags and many of them deformed with horrible disorders ; and a city is so hard a place for people who are poor and sensitive that many choose to die by their own hand.”

“ You must think me very simple,” answered Will. “ Although I have never been out of this valley, believe me, I have used my eyes. I know how one thing lives on another ; for instance, how the fish

hangs in the eddy to catch his fellows ; and the shepherd, who makes so pretty a picture carrying home the lamb is only carrying it home for dinner. I do not expect to find all things right in your cities. That is not what troubles me : it might have been that once upon a time ; but although I live here always, I have asked many questions and learned a great deal in these last years, and certainly enough to cure me of my old fancies. But you would not have me die like a dog and not see all that is to be seen, and do all that man can do, let it be good or evil ? You would not have me spend all my days between this road here and the river, and not so much as make a motion to be up and live my life ? I would rather die out of hand," he cried, " than linger on as I am doing."

" Thousands of people," said the young man, " live and die like you, and are none the less happy."

" Ah ! " said Will, " if there are thousands who would like, why should not one of them have any place ? "

It was quite dark ; there was a hanging lamp in the arbour which lit up the table and the faces of the speakers ; and along the arch, the leaves upon the trellis stood out illuminated against the night sky, a pattern of transparent green upon a dusky purple. The fat young man rose, and, taking Will by the arm, led him out under the open heavens.

" Did you ever look at the stars ? " he asked, pointing upwards.

" Often and often " answered Will.

" And do you know what they are ? "

" I have fancied many things."

" They are worlds like ours," said the young man. " Some of them less ; many of them a million times greater ; and some of the least sparkles that you see are not only worlds, but whole clusters of worlds turning about each other in the midst of space. We do not know what there may be in any of them, perhaps the answer to all our difficulties or the cure of all our sufferings, and yet we can never reach them ; not all the skill of the craftiest of men can fit out a ship for the nearest of these our neighbours, nor would the life of the most aged suffice for such a journey. When a great battle has been lost or a dear friend is dead, when we are hipped or in high spirits, there they are unweariedly shining overhead. We may stand down here, a whole army of us together, and shout until we break our hearts, and not a whisper reaches them. We may climb the highest mountain, and we are no

nearer them. All we can do is to stand down here in the garden and take off our hats; the starshine lights upon our heads, and where mine is a little bald, I daresay you can see it glisten in the darkness. The mountain and the mouse. That is like to be all we shall ever have to do with Arcturus or Aldebaran. Can you apply a parable?" he added, laying his hand upon Will's shoulder. "It is not the same thing as a reason, but usually vastly more convincing."

Will hung his head a little, and then raised it once more to heaven. The stars seemed to expand and emit a sharper brilliancy; and as he kept turning his eyes higher and higher, they seemed to increase in multitude under his gaze.

"I see," he said, turning to the young man. "We are in a rat-trap."

"Something of that size. Did you ever see a squirrel turning in a cage? and another squirrel sitting philosophically over his nuts? I needn't ask you which of them looked more of a fool."

THE PARSON'S MARJORY

After some years the old people died, both in one winter, very carefully tended by their adopted son, and very quietly mourned when they were gone. People who had heard of his roving fancies supposed he would hasten to sell the property, and go down the river to push his fortunes. But there was never any sign of such an intention on the part of Will. On the contrary, he had the inn set on a better footing, and hired a couple of servants to assist him carrying it on; and there he settled down, a kind, talkative, inscrutable young man, six feet three in his stockings, with an iron constitution and a friendly voice. He soon began to take rank in the district as a bit of an oddity: it was not much to be wondered at from the first, for he was always full of notions, and kept calling the plainest common sense in question; but what most raised the report upon him was the odd circumstance of his courtship with the parson's Marjory.

The parson's Marjory was a lass about nineteen, when Will would be about thirty, well enough looking, and much better educated than any other girl in that part of the country, as became her parentage. She held her head very high, and had already refused several offers of marriage with a grand air, which got her hard names among the neigh-

bours. For all that she was a good girl, and one that would have made any man well contented.

Will had never seen much of her ; for although the church and parsonage were only two miles from his own door, he was never known to go there but on Sundays. It chanced, however, that the parsonage fell into disrepair, and had to be dismantled ; and the parson and his daughter took lodgings for a month or so, on very much reduced terms, at Will's inn. Now what with the inn, and the mill, and the miller's savings, our friend was a man of substance, and besides that, he had a name for a good temper and shrewdness, which make a capital portion in marriage ; and so it was currently gossiped among their ill-wishers that the parson and his daughter had not chosen their temporary lodgings with their eyes shut. Will was about the last man in the world to be cajoled or frightened into marriage. You had only to look into his eyes, limpid and still like pools of water, and yet with a sort of clear light that seemed to come from within, and you would understand at once that here was one who knew his own mind, and would stand to it immovably. Marjory herself was no weakling by her looks, with strong, steady eyes and a resolute and quiet bearing. It might be a question whether she was not Will's match in steadfastness, after all, or which of them would rule the roast in marriage. But Marjory had never given it a thought, and accompanied her father with the most unshaken innocence and unconcern.

The season was still so early that Will's customers were few and far between ; but the lilacs were already flowering, and the weather was so mild that the party took dinner under the trellis, with the noise of the river in their ears and the woods ringing about them with the songs of the birds. Will soon began to take a particular pleasure in these dinners. The parson was rather a dull companion, with a habit of dozing at table ; but nothing rude or cruel ever fell from his lips. And as for the parson's daughter, she suited her surroundings with the best grace imaginable ; and whatever she said seemed so pat and pretty that Will conceived a great idea of her talents. He could see her face, as she leaned forward, against a background of rising pine-woods ; her eyes shone peaceably ; the light lay round her hair like a kerchief ; something that was hardly a smile rippled her pale cheeks, and Will could not contain himself from gazing on her in an agreeable dismay. She looked, even in her quietest moments, so complete in herself, and so quick with life down to her finger-tips and the very

skirts of her dress, that the remainder of created things became no more than a blot by comparison ; and if Will glanced away from her to her surroundings, the trees looked inanimate and senseless, the clouds hung in heaven like dead things, and even the mountain-tops were disenchanted. The whole valley could not compare with this one girl.

Will was always observant in the society of his fellow-creatures ; but his observation became almost painfully eager in the case of Marjory. He listened to all she uttered, and read her eyes, at the same time, for the unspoken commentary. Many kind, simple, and sincere speeches found echo in his heart. He became conscious of a soul beautifully poised upon itself, nothing doubting, nothing desiring, clothed in peace. It was not possible to separate her thoughts from her appearance.

The turn of her wrist, the still sound of her voice, the light in her eyes, the lines of her body, fell in tune with her grave gentle words, like the accompaniment that sustains and harmonises the voice of the singer. Her influence was one thing, not to be divided or discussed, only to be felt with gratitude and joy. To Will, her presence recalled something of his childhood, and the thought of her took its place in his mind beside that of dawn, of running water, and of the earliest violets and lilacs. It is the property of things seen for the first time, or for the first time after long, like the flowers in spring, to reawaken in us the sharp edge of sense and that impression of mystic strangeness which otherwise passes out of life with the coming years ; but the sight of a loved face is what renews a man's character from the fountain upwards.

One day after dinner Will took a stroll among the firs ; a grave beatitude possessed him from top to toe, and he kept smiling to himself and the landscape as he went. The river ran between the stepping-stones with a pretty wimple ; a bird sang loudly in the wood ; the hill-tops looked immeasurably high, and as he glanced at them from time to time seemed to contemplate his movements with a beneficent but awful curiosity. His way took him to the eminence which overlooked the plain ; and there he sat down upon a stone, and fell into deep and pleasant thought. The plain lay abroad with its cities and silver river ; everything was asleep, except a great eddy of birds which kept rising and falling and going round and round in the blue air. He repeated Marjory's name aloud, and the sound of it gratified his ear.

He shut his eyes, and her image sprang up before him, quietly luminous and attended with good thoughts. The river might run for ever ; the birds fly higher and higher till they touched the stars. He saw it was empty bustle after all ; for here, without stirring a foot, waiting patiently in his narrow valley, he also had attained the better sunlight.

The next day Will made a sort of declaration across the dinner-table, while the parson was filling his pipe.

" Miss Marjory," he said, " I never knew any one I liked so well as you. I am mostly a cold, unkindly sort of man, not from want of heart, but out of strangeness in my way of thinking ; and people seem far away from me. 'Tis as if there were a circle round me, which kept every one out but you ; I can hear the others talking and laughing, but you come quite close. Maybe this is disagreeable to you ? " he asked.

Marjory made no answer.

" Speak up, girl," said the parson.

" Nay, now," returned Will, " I wouldn't press her, parson. I feel tongue-tied myself, who am not used to it ; and she's a woman, and little more than a child, when all is said. But for my part, as far as I can understand what people mean by it, I fancy I must be what they call in love. I do not wish to be held as committing myself, for I may be wrong ; but that is how I believe things are with me. And if Miss Marjory should feel any otherwise on her part, mayhap she would be so kind as shake her head."

Marjory was silent, and gave no sign that she had heard.

" How is that, parson ? " asked Will.

" The girl must speak," replied the parson, laying down his pipe. " Here's our neighbour who says he loves you, Madge. Do you love him, ay or no ? "

" I think I do," said Marjory, faintly.

" Well then, that's all that could be wished ! " cried Will heartily. And he took her hand across the table, and held it a moment in both of his with great satisfaction.

" You must marry," observed the parson, replacing his pipe in his mouth.

" Is that the right thing to do, think you ? " demanded Will.

" It is indispensable," said the parson.

" Very well," replied the wooer.

Two or three days passed away with great delight to Will, although

a bystander might scarce have found it out. He continued to take his meals opposite Marjory, and to talk with her in her father's presence ; but he made no attempt to see her alone, nor in any other way changed his conduct towards her from what it had been since the beginning. Perhaps the girl was a little disappointed, and perhaps not unjustly ; and yet if it had been enough to be always in the thoughts of another person, and so pervade and alter his whole life, she might have been thoroughly contented. For she was never out of Will's mind for an instant. He sat over the poised fish and straining weeds ; he wandered out alone into the purple even, with all the blackbirds piping round him in the wood ; he rose early in the morning, and saw the sky turn from grey to gold, and the light leap upon the hill-tops ; and all the while he kept wondering if he had never seen such things before, or how it was that they should look so different now. The sound of his own mill-wheel, or the wind among the trees, confounded and charmed his heart. The most enchanting thoughts presented themselves unbidden in his mind. He was so happy that he could not sleep at night, and so restless that he could hardly sit still out of her company. And yet it seemed as if he avoided her rather than sought her out.

One day, as he was coming home from a ramble, Will found Marjory in the garden picking flowers, and as he came up with her, slackened his pace and continued walking by her side. " Do you like flowers ? " he said.

" Indeed I love them dearly," she replied, " Do you ? "

" Why, no," said he, " not so much. They are a very small affair, when all is done. I can fancy people caring for them greatly, but not doing as you are just now."

" How ? " she asked, pausing and looking up at him.

" Plucking them," said he. " They are a deal better off where they are, and look a deal prettier, if you go to that."

" I wish to have them for my own," she answered, " to carry them near my heart, and keep them in my room. They tempt me when they grow here ; they seem to say, ' Come and do something with us ' ; but once I have cut them and put them by, the charm is laid, and I can look at them with quite an easy heart."

" You wish to possess them," replied Will, " in order to think no more about them. It's a bit like killing the goose with the golden eggs. It's a bit like what I wished to do when I was a boy. Because

I had a fancy for looking out over the plain, I wished to go down there—where I couldn't look out over it any longer. Was not that a fine reasoning? Dear, dear, if they only thought of it, all the world would do like me; and you would let your flowers alone, just as I stay up here in the mountains." Suddenly he broke off sharp. "By the Lord!" he cried. And when she asked him what was wrong, he turned the question off, and walked away into the house with rather a humorous expression of face.

He was silent at table; and after the night had fallen and the stars had come out overhead, he walked up and down for hours in the courtyard and garden with an uneven pace. There was still a light in the window of Marjory's room: one little oblong patch of orange in a world of dark blue hills and silver starlight. Will's mind ran a great deal on the window; but his thoughts were not very lover-like. "There she is in her room," he thought, "and there are the stars overhead—a blessing upon both!" Both were good influences in his life; both soothed and braced him in his profound contentment with the world. And what more should he desire with either? The fat young man and his counsels were so present to his mind that he threw back his head, and, putting his hands before his mouth, shouted aloud to the populous heavens. Whether from the position of his head or the sudden strain of the exertion, he seemed to see a momentary shock among the stars, and a diffusion of frosty light pass from one to another along the sky. At the same instant, a corner of the blind was lifted and lowered again at once. He laughed a loud ho-ho! "One and another!" thought Will. "The stars tremble, and the blind goes up. Why, before Heaven, what a great magician I must be! Now if I were only a fool, should not I be in a pretty way?" And he went off to bed, chuckling to himself, "If I were only a fool!"

The next morning, pretty early, he saw her once more in the garden, and sought her out.

"I have been thinking about getting married," he began abruptly; "and after having turned it all over, I have made up my mind it's not worth while."

She turned upon him for a single moment; but his radiant, kindly appearance would, under the circumstances, have disconcerted an angel, and she looked down again upon the ground in silence. He could see her tremble.

"I hope you don't mind," he went on, a little taken aback. "You

ought not. I have turned it all over, and upon my soul there's nothing in it. We should never be one whit nearer than we are just now, and, if I am a wise man, nothing like so happy."

"It is unnecessary to go round about with me," she said. "I very well remember that you refused to commit yourself; and now that I see you were mistaken, and in reality have never cared for me, I can only feel sad that I have been so far misled."

"I ask your pardon," said Will stoutly; "you do not understand my meaning. As to whether I have ever loved you or not, I must leave that to others. But for one thing, my feeling is not changed; and for another, you may make it your boast that you have made my whole life and character something different from what they were. I mean what I say; no less. I do not think getting married is worth while. I would rather you went on living with your father, so that I could walk over and see you once, or maybe twice a week, as people go to church, and then we should both be all the happier between whiles. That's my notion. But I'll marry you if you will," he added.

"Do you know that you are insulting me?" she broke out.

"Not I, Marjory," said he; "if there is anything in a clear conscience, not I. I offer all my heart's best affection; you can take it or want it, though I suspect it's beyond either your power or mine to change what has once been done and set me fancy-free. I'll marry you, if you like; but I tell you again and again, it's not worth while, and we had best stay friends. Though I am a quiet man I have noticed a heap of things in my life. Trust in me, and take things as I propose; or, if you don't like that, say the word, and I'll marry you out of hand."

There was a considerable pause, and Will, who began to feel uneasy, began to grow angry in consequence.

"It seems you are too proud to say your mind," he said. "Believe me, that's a pity. A clean shrift makes simple living. Can a man be more downright or honourable to a woman than I have been? I have said my say, and given you your choice. Do you want me to marry you? or will you take my friendship, as I think best? or have you had enough of me for good? Speak out, for the dear God's sake! You know your father told you a girl should speak her mind in these affairs."

She seemed to recover herself at that, turned without a word, walked rapidly through the garden, and disappeared into the house,

leaving Will in some confusion as to the result. He walked up and down the garden, whistling softly to himself. Sometimes he stopped and contemplated the sky and hill-tops ; sometimes he went down to the tail of the weir and sat there, looking foolishly in the water. All this dubiety and perturbation was so foreign to his nature and the life which he had resolutely chosen for himself that he began to regret Marjory's arrival. "After all," he thought, "I was as happy as a man need be. I could come down here and watch my fishes all day long if I wanted : I was as settled and contented as my old mill."

Marjory came down to dinner, looking very trim and quiet ; and no sooner were all three at table than she made her father a speech, with her eyes fixed upon her plate, but showing no other sign of embarrassment or distress.

"Father," she began, "Mr. Will and I have been talking things over. We see that we have each made a mistake about our feelings, and he has agreed, at my request, to give up all idea of marriage, and be no more than my very good friend, as in the past. You see, there is no shadow of a quarrel, and indeed I hope we shall see a great deal of him in the future, for his visits will always be welcome in our house. Of course, father, you will know best, but perhaps we should do better to leave Mr. Will's house for the present. I believe, after what has passed, we should hardly be agreeable inmates for some days."

Will, who had commanded himself with difficulty from the first, broke out upon this an inarticulate noise, and raised one hand with an appearance of real dismay, as if he were about to interfere and contradict. But she checked him at once, looking up at him with a swift glance and an angry flush upon her cheek.

"You will perhaps have the good grace," she said, "to let me explain these matters for myself."

Will was put entirely out of countenance by her expression and the ring of her voice. He held his peace, concluding that there were some things about this girl beyond his comprehension, in which he was exactly right.

The parson was quite crestfallen. He tried to prove that this was no more than a true lovers' tiff, which would pass off before night ; and when he was dislodged from that position, he went on to argue that where there was no quarrel there could be no call for a separation ; for the good man liked both his entertainment and his host. It was curious to see how the girl managed them, saying little all the time,

and that very quietly, and yet twisting them round her finger and insensibly leading them wherever she would by feminine tact and generalship. It scarcely seemed to have been her doing—it seemed as if things had merely so fallen out—that she and her father took their departure that same afternoon in a farm cart, and went farther down the valley, to wait, until their own house was ready for them, in another hamlet. But Will had been observing closely, and was well aware of her dexterity and resolution. When he found himself alone he had a great many curious matters to turn over in his mind. He was very sad and solitary, to begin with. All the interest had gone out of his life, and he might look up at the stars as long as he pleased, he somehow failed to find support or consolation. And then he was in such a turmoil of spirit about Marjory. He had been puzzled and irritated at her behaviour, and yet he could not keep himself from admiring it. He thought he recognised a fine, perverse angel in that still soul which he had never hitherto suspected ; and though he saw it was an influence that would fit but ill with his own life of artificial calm, he could not keep himself from ardently desiring to possess it. Like a man who has lived among shadows and now meets the sun, he was both pained and delighted.

As the days went forward he passed from one extreme to another ; now pluming himself on the strength of his determination, now despising his timid and silly caution. The former was, perhaps, the true thought of his heart, and represented the regular tenor of the man's reflection ; but the latter burst forth from time to time with an unruly violence, and then he would forget all consideration, and go up and down his house and garden or walk among the fir-woods like one who is beside himself with remorse. To equable, steady-minded Will this state of matters was intolerable ; and he determined, at whatever cost, to bring it to an end. So, one warm summer afternoon, he put on his best clothes, took a thorn switch in his hand, and set out down the valley by the river. As soon as he had taken his determination, he had regained at a bound his customary peace of heart, and he enjoyed the bright weather and the variety of the scene without any admixture of alarm or unpleasant eagerness. It was nearly the same to him how the matter turned out. If she accepted him he would have to marry her this time, which perhaps was all for the best. If she refused him, he would have done his utmost, and might follow his way in the future with an untroubled conscience. He hoped, on the whole, she would

refuse him ; and then, again, as he saw the brown roof which sheltered her, peeping through some willows at an angle of the stream, he was half inclined to reverse the wish, and more than half ashamed of himself for this infirmity of purpose.

Marjory seemed glad to see him, and gave him her hand without affectation or delay.

" I have been thinking about this marriage," he began.

" So have I," she answered. " And I respect you more and more for a very wise man. You understood me better than I understood myself ; and I am now quite certain that things are all for the best as they are."

" At the same time——," ventured Will.

" You must be tired," she interrupted. " Take a seat and let me fetch you a glass of wine. The afternoon is so warm ; and I wish you not to be displeased with your visit. You must come quite often—once a week, if you can spare the time ; I am always so glad to see my friends."

" Oh, very well," thought Will to himself. " It appears I was right after all." And he paid a very agreeable visit, walked home again in capital spirits, and gave himself no further concern about the matter.

For nearly three years Will and Marjory continued on these terms, seeing each other once or twice a week without any word of love between them ; and for all that time I believe Will was nearly as happy as a man can be. He rather stinted himself the pleasure of seeing her ; and he would often walk half-way over to the parsonage, and then back again, as if to whet his appetite. Indeed there was one corner of the road, whence he could see the church spire wedged into a crevice of the valley between sloping fir-woods, with a triangular snatch of plain by way of background, which he greatly affected as a place to sit and moralise in before returning homewards ; and the peasants got so much into the habit of finding him there in the twilight that they gave it the name of " Will o' the Mill's Corner."

At the end of the three years Marjory played him a sad trick by suddenly marrying somebody else. Will kept his countenance bravely, and merely remarked that, for as little as he knew of women, he had acted very prudently in not marrying her himself three years before. She plainly knew very little of her own mind, and, in spite of a deceptive manner, was as fickle and flighty as the rest of them. He had to congratulate himself on an escape, he said, and would take a higher opinion of his own wisdom in consequence. But at heart, he was

reasonably displeased, moped a good deal for a month or two, and fell away in flesh, to the astonishment of his serving lads.

It was perhaps a year after this marriage that Will was awakened late one night by the sound of a horse galloping on the road, followed by precipitate knocking at the inn-door. He opened his window and saw a farm servant, mounted and holding a led horse by the bridle, who told him to make what haste he could and go along with him, for Marjory was dying, and had sent urgently to fetch him to her bedside. Will was no horseman, and made so little speed upon the way that the poor young wife was very near her end before he arrived. But they had some minutes' talk in private, and he was present and wept very bitterly while she breathed her last.

DEATH

Year after year went away into nothing, with great explosions and outcries in the cities on the plain—red revolt springing up and being suppressed in blood, battle swaying hither and thither, patient astronomers in observatory towers picking out and christening new stars, plays being performed in lighted theatres, people being carried into hospital on stretchers, and all the usual turmoil and agitation of men's lives in crowded centres. Up in Will's valley only the winds and seasons made an epoch; the fish hung in the swift stream, the birds circled overhead, the pine-tops rustled underneath the stars, the tall hills stood over all; and Will went to and fro, minding his wayside inn, until the snow began to thicken on his head. His heart was young and vigorous; and if his pulses kept a sober time, they still beat strong and steady in his wrists. He carried a ruddy stain on either cheek, like a ripe apple; he stooped a little, but his step was still firm; and his sinewy hands were reached out to all men with friendly pressure. His face was covered with those wrinkles which are got in open air, and which, rightly looked at, are no more than a sort of permanent sunburning: such wrinkles heighten the stupidity of stupid faces, but to a person like Will, with his clear eyes and smiling mouth, only give another charm by testifying to a simple and easy life. His talk was full of wise sayings. He had a taste for other people, and other people had a taste for him. When the valley was full of tourists in the season, there were merry nights in Will's harbour; and his views, which seemed whimsical to his neighbours, were often

enough admired by learned people out of towns and colleges. Indeed, he had a very noble old age, and grew daily better known ; so that his fame was heard of in the cities of the plain ; and young men who had been summer travellers spoke together in *cafés* of Will o' the Mill and his rough philosophy. Many and many an invitation, you may be sure, he had ; but nothing could tempt him from his upland valley. He would shake his head and smile over his tobacco-pipe with a deal of meaning. " I am a dead man now : I have lived and died already. Fifty years ago you would have brought my heart into my mouth ; and now you do not even tempt me. But that is the object of long living, that man should cease to care about life." And again : " There is only one difference between a long life and a good dinner : that, in the dinner, the sweets come last." Or once more : " When I was a boy, I was a bit puzzled, and hardly knew whether it was myself or the world that was curious and worth looking into. Now, I know it is myself, and stick to that."

He never showed any symptom of frailty, but kept stalwart and firm to the last ; but they say he grew less talkative towards the end, and would listen to other people by the hour in an amused and sympathetic silence. Only, when he did speak, it was more to the point and more charged with old experience. He drank a bottle of wine gladly ; above all, at sunset on the hill-top or quite late at night under the stars in the arbour. The sight of something attractive and unattainable seasoned his enjoyment, he would say ; and he professed he had lived long enough to admire a candle all the more when he could compare it with a planet.

One night, in his seventy-second year, he awoke in bed in such uneasiness of body and mind that he arose and dressed himself and went out to meditate in the arbour. It was pitch dark, without a star ; the river was swollen, and the wet woods and meadows loaded the air with perfume. It had thundered during the day, and it promised more thunder for the morrow. A murky, stifling night for a man of seventy-two ! Whether it was the weather or the wakefulness, or some little touch of fever in his old limbs, Will's mind was besieged by tumultuous and crying memories. His boyhood, the night with the fat man, the death of his adopted parents, the summer days with Marjory, and many of those small circumstances, which seem nothing to another, and are yet the very gist of a man's own life to himself—things seen, words heard, looks misconstrued—arose from their for-

gotten corners and usurped his attention. The dead themselves were with him, not merely taking part in his thin show of memory that defiled before his brain, but revisiting his bodily senses as they do in profound and vivid dreams. The fat young man leaned his elbows on the table opposite ; Marjory came and went with an apronful of flowers between the garden and the arbour ; he could hear the old parson knocking out his pipe or blowing his resonant nose. The tide of his consciousness ebbed and flowed : he was sometimes half-asleep and drowned in his reflections of the past ; and sometimes he was broad awake, wondering at himself. But about the middle of the night he was startled by the voice of the dead miller calling him out of the house as he used to do on the arrival of custom. The hallucination was so perfect that Will sprang from his seat and stood listening for the summons to be repeated ; and as he listened he became conscious of another noise besides the brawling of the river and the ringing in his feverish ears. It was like the stir of horses and the creaking of harness, as though a carriage with an impatient team had been brought up upon the road before the courtyard gate. At such an hour, upon this rough and dangerous pass, the supposition was no better than absurd ; and Will dismissed it from his mind, and resumed his seat upon the arbour chair ; and sleep closed over him again like running water. He was once again awakened by the dead miller's call, thinner and more spectral than before ; and once again he heard the noise of an equipage upon the road. And so thrice and four times, the same dream, or the same fancy, presented itself to his senses : until at length, smiling to himself as when one humours a nervous child, he proceeded towards the gate to set his uncertainty at rest.

From the arbour to the gate was no great distance, and yet it took Will some time ; it seemed as if the dead thickened around him in the court, and crossed his path at every step. For, first, he was suddenly surprised by an overpowering sweetness of heliotropes ; it was as if his garden had been planted with this flower from end to end, and the hot, damp night had drawn forth all their perfumes in a breath. Now the heliotrope had been Marjory's favourite flower, and since her death not one of them had ever been planted in Will's ground.

" I must be going crazy," he thought. " Poor Marjory and her heliotropes ! "

And with that he raised his eyes towards the window that had once been hers. If he had been bewildered before, he was now almost

terrified ; for there was a light in the room ; the window was an orange oblong as of yore ; and the corner of the blind was lifted and let fall as on the night when he stood and shouted to the stars in his perplexity. The illusion only endured an instant ; but it left him somewhat unmanned, rubbing his eyes and staring at the outline of the house and the black night behind it. While he thus stood, and it seemed as if he must have stood there quite a long time, there came a renewal of the noises on the road : and he turned in time to meet a stranger, who was advancing to meet him across the court. There was something like the outline of a great carriage discernible on the road behind the stranger, and, above that, a few black pine-tops, like so many plumes.

" Master Will ? " asked the new-comer, in brief military fashion.

" That same, sir," answered Will. " Can I do anything to serve you ? "

" I have heard you much spoken of, Master Will," returned the other ; " much spoken of, and well. And though I have both hands full of business, I wish to drink a bottle of wine with you in the arbour. Before I go, I shall introduce myself."

Will led the way to the trellis, and got a lamp lighted and a bottle uncorked. He was not altogether unused to such complimentary interviews, and hoped little enough from this one, being schooled by many disappointments. A sort of cloud had settled on his wits and prevented him from remembering the strangeness of the hour. He moved like a person in his sleep ; and it seemed as if the lamp caught fire and the bottle came uncorked with the facility of thought. Still, he had some curiosity about the appearance of his visitor, and tried in vain to turn the light into his face ; either he handled the lamp clumsily, or there was a dimness over his eyes ; but he could make out little more than a shadow, as he wiped out the glasses, and began to feel cold and strange about the heart. The silence weighed upon him, for he could hear nothing now, not even the river, but the drumming of his own arteries in his ears.

" Here's to you," said the stranger, roughly.

" Here is my service, sir," replied Will, sipping his wine, which somehow tasted oddly.

" I understand you are a very positive fellow," pursued the stranger.

Will made answer with a smile of some satisfaction and a little nod.

" So am I," continued the other ; " and it is the delight of my

heart to tramp on people's corns. I will have nobody positive but myself ; not one. I have crossed the whims, in my time, of kings and generals and great artists. And what would you say," he went on, " if I had come up here on purpose to cross yours ? "

Will had on his tongue to make a sharp rejoinder ; but the politeness of an old innkeeper prevailed ; and he held his peace and made answer with a civil gesture of the hand.

" I have," said the stranger. " And if I did not hold you in a particular esteem, I should make no words about the matter. It appears you pride yourself on staying where you are. You mean to stick by your inn. Now I mean you shall come for a turn with me in my barouche ; and before this bottle's empty, so you shall."

" That would be an odd thing, to be sure," replied Will, with a chuckle. " Why, sir, I have grown here like an old oak-tree ; the Devil himself could hardly root me up : and for all I perceive you are a very entertaining old gentleman, I would wager you another bottle you lose your pains with me."

The dimness of Will's eyesight had been increasing all this while ; but he was somehow conscious of a sharp and chilling scrutiny which irritated and yet overmastered him.

" You need not think," he broke out suddenly, in an explosive, febrile manner that startled and alarmed himself, " that I am a stay-at-home because I fear anything under God. God knows I am tired enough of it all ; and when the time comes for a longer journey than ever you dream of, I reckon I shall find myself prepared."

The stranger emptied his glass and pushed it away from him. He looked down for a little, and then, leaning over the table, tapped Will three times upon the forearm with a single finger. " The time has come ! " he said solemnly.

An ugly thrill spread from the spot he touched. The tones of his voice were dull and startling, and echoed strangely in Will's heart.

" I beg your pardon," he said, with some discomposure. " What do you mean ? "

" Look at me, and you will find your eyesight swim. Raise your hand ; it is dead-heavy. This is your last bottle of wine, Master Will, and your last night upon the earth."

" You are a doctor ? " quavered Will.

" The best that ever was," replied the other ; " for I cure both mind and body with the same prescription. I take away all pain and I

forgive all sins ; and where my patients have gone wrong in life, I smooth out all complications and set them free again upon their feet."

" I have no need of you," said Will.

" A time comes for all men, Master Will," replied the doctor, " when the helm is taken out of their hands. For you, because you were prudent and quiet, it has been long of coming, and you have had long to discipline yourself for its reception. You have seen what is to be seen about your mill ; you have sat close all your days like a hare in its form ; but now that is at an end ; and," added the doctor, getting on his feet, " you must arise and come with me."

" You are a strange physician," said Will, looking steadfastly upon his guest.

" I am a natural law," he replied, " and people call me Death."

" Why did you not tell me so at first ? " cried Will. " I have been waiting for you these many years. Give me your hand, and welcome ! "

" Lean upon my arm," said the stranger, " for already your strength abates. Lean on me as heavily as you need ; for though I am old, I am very strong. It is but three steps to my carriage, and there all your trouble ends. Why, Will," he added, " I have been yearning for you as if you were my own son ; and of all the men that ever I came for in my long days, I have come for you most gladly. I am caustic, and sometimes offend people at first sight ; but I am a good friend at heart to such as you ! "

" Since Marjory was taken," returned Will, " I declare before God you were the only friend I had to look for."

So the pair went arm-in-arm across the courtyard.

One of the servants awoke about this time and heard the noise of horses pawing before he dropped asleep again ; all down the valley that night there was a rushing as of a smooth and steady wind descending towards the plain ; and when the world rose next morning, sure enough Will o' the Mill had gone at last upon his travels.

A LODGING FOR THE NIGHT

A STORY OF FRANCIS VILLON

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

IT was late in November 1456. The snow fell over Paris with rigorous, relentless persistence; sometimes the wind made a sally and scattered it in flying vortices; sometimes there was a lull, and flake after flake descended out of the black night air, silent, circuitous, interminable. To poor people, looking up under moist eyebrows, it seemed a wonder where it all came from. Master Francis Villon had propounded an alternative that afternoon, at a tavern window: was it only Pagan Jupiter plucking geese upon Olympus? or were the holy angels moulting? He was only a poor Master of Arts, he went on; and as the question somewhat touched upon divinity, he durst not venture to conclude. A silly old priest from Montargis, who was among the company, treated the young rascal to a bottle of wine in honour of the jest and the grimaces with which it was accompanied, and swore on his own white beard that he had been just such another irreverent dog when he was Villon's age.

The air was raw and pointed, but not far below freezing; and the flakes were large, damp, and adhesive. The whole city was sheeted up. An army might have marched from end to end and not a footfall given the alarm. If there were any belated birds in heaven, they saw the island like a large white patch, and the bridges like slim white spars, on the black ground of the river. High up overhead the snow settled among the tracery of the cathedral towers. Many a niche was drifted full; many a statue wore a long white bonnet on its grotesque or sainted head. The gargoyles had been transformed into great false noses, drooping towards the point. The crockets were like upright pillows swollen on one side. In the intervals of the wind there was a dull sound of dripping about the precincts of the church.

The cemetery of St. John had taken its own share of the snow. All the graves were decently covered; tall white housetops stood around in grave array; worthy burghers were long ago in bed, benightcapped

like their domiciles ; there was no light in all the neighbourhood but a little peep from a lamp that hung swinging in the church choir, and tossed the shadows to and fro in time to its oscillations. The clock was hard on ten when the patrol went by with halberds and a lantern, beating their lands ; and they saw nothing suspicious about the cemetery of St. John.

Yet there was a small house, backed up against the cemetery wall, which was still awake, and awake to evil purpose, in that snoring district. There was not much to betray it from without ; only a stream of warm vapour from the chimney-top, a patch where the snow melted on the roof, and a few half-obliterated footprints at the door. But within, behind the shuttered windows, Master Francis Villon the poet, and some of the thievish crew with whom he consorted, were keeping the night alive and passing round the bottle.

A great pile of living embers diffused a strong and ruddy glow from the arched chimney. Before this straddled Dom Nicolas, the Picardy monk, with his skirts picked up and his fat legs bared to the comfortable warmth. His dilated shadow cut the room in half ; and the firelight only escaped on either side of his broad person, and in a little pool between his outspread feet. His face had the beery, bruised appearance of the continual drinker's ; it was covered with a network of congested veins, purple in ordinary circumstances, but now pale violet, for even with his back to the fire the cold pinched him on the other side. His cowl had half fallen back, and made a strange excrescence on either side of his bull neck. So he straddled, grumbling, and cut the room in half with the shadow of his portly frame.

On the right, Villon and Guy Tabary were huddled together over a scrap of parchment ; Villon making a ballade which he was to call the "Ballade of Roast Fish," and Tabary spluttering admiration at his shoulder. The poet was a rag of a man, dark, little, and lean, with hollow cheeks and thin black locks. He carried his four-and-twenty years with feverish animation. Greed had made folds about his eyes, evil smiles had puckered his mouth. The wolf and pig struggled together in his face. It was an eloquent, sharp, ugly, earthly countenance. His hands were small and prehensile, with fingers knotted like a cord ; and they were continually flickering in front of him in violent and expressive pantomime. As for Tabary, a broad, complacent, admiring imbecility breathed from his squash nose and slobbering lips : he had become a thief, just as he might have become the most decent

of burgesses, by the imperious chance that rules the lives of human geese and human donkeys.

At the monk's other hand, Montigny and Thevenin Pensete played a game of chance. About the first there clung some flavour of good birth and training, as about a fallen angel ; something long, lithe, and courtly in the person ; something aquiline and darkling in the face. Thevenin, poor soul, was in great feather : he had done a good stroke of knavery that afternoon in the Faubourg St. Jacques, and all night he had been gaining from Montigny. A flat smile illuminated his face ; his bald head shone rosily in a garland of red curls ; his little protuberant stomach shook with silent chucklings as he swept in his gains.

" Doubles or quits ? " said Thevenin.

Montigny nodded grimly.

" *Some may prefer to dine in state,*" wrote Villon, "*On bread and cheese on silver plate.* Or—or—help me out, Guido ! "

Tabary giggled.

" *Or parsley on a golden dish,*" scribbled the poet.

The wind was freshening without ; it drove the snow before it, and sometimes raised its voice in a victorious whoop, and made sepulchral grumblings in the chimney. The cold was growing sharper as the night went on. Villon, protruding his lips, imitated the gust with something between a whistle and a groan. It was an eerie, uncomfortable talent of the poet's, much detested by the Picardy monk.

" Can't you hear it rattle in the gibbet ? " said Villon. " They are all dancing the devil's jig on nothing, up there. You may dance, my gallants, you'll be none the warmer ! Whew ! what a gust ! Down went somebody just now ! A medlar the fewer on the three-legged medlar-tree !—I say, Dom Nicolas, it'll be cold to-night on the St. Denis Road ? " he asked.

Dom Nicolas winked both his big eyes, and seemed to choke upon his Adam's apple. Montfaucon, the great grisly Paris gibbet, stood hard by the St. Denis Road, and the pleasantry touched him on the raw. As for Tabary, he laughed immoderately over the medlars ; he had never heard anything more light-hearted ; and he held his sides and crowed. Villon fetched him a fillip on the nose, which turned his mirth into an attack of coughing.

" Oh, stop that row," said Villon, " and think of rhymes to ' fish.' "

" Doubles or quits," said Montigny doggedly.

" With all my heart," quoth Thevenin.

"Is there any more in that bottle?" asked the monk.

"Open another," said Villon. "How do you ever hope to fill that big hogshead, your body, with little things like bottles? And how do you expect to get to heaven? How many angels, do you fancy, can be spared to carry up a single monk from Picardy? Or do you think yourself another Elias—and they'll send the coach for you?"

"*Hominibus impossibile*," replied the monk, as he filled his glass.

Tabary was in ecstasies.

Villon filliped his nose again.

"Laugh at my jokes, if you like," he said.

"It was very good," objected Tabary.

Villon made a face at him. "Think of rhymes to 'fish,'" he said. "What have you to do with Latin? You'll wish you knew none of it at the great assizes, when the devil calls for Guido Tabary, clericus—the devil with the hump-back and red-hot finger-nails. Talking of the devil," he added in a whisper, "look at Montigny!"

All three peered covertly at the gamester. He did not seem to be enjoying his luck. His mouth was a little to a side; one nostril nearly shut, and the other much inflated. The black dog was on his back, as people say, in terrifying nursery metaphor; and he breathed hard under the gruesome burden.

"He looks as if he could knife him," whispered Tabary, with round eyes.

The monk shuddered, and turned his face and spread his open hands to the red embers. It was the cold that thus affected Dom Nicolas, and not any excess of moral sensibility.

"Come now," said Villon—"about this ballade. How does it run so far?" And beating time with his hand, he read it aloud to Tabary.

They were interrupted at the fourth rhyme by a brief and fatal movement among the gamesters. The round was completed, and Thevenin was just opening his mouth to claim another victory, when Montigny leaped up, swift as an adder, and stabbed him to the heart. The blow took effect before he had time to utter a cry, before he had time to move. A tremor or two convulsed his frame; his hands opened and shut, his heels rattled on the floor; then his head rolled backward over one shoulder with the eyes wide open; and Thevenin Pensete's spirit had returned to Him who made it.

Every one sprang to his feet; but the business was over in two

twos. The four living fellows looked at each other in rather a ghastly fashion ; the dead man contemplating a corner of the roof with a singular and ugly leer.

" My God ! " said Tabary ; and he began to pray in Latin.

Villon broke out into hysterical laughter. He came a step forward and ducked a ridiculous bow at Thevenin, and laughed still louder. Then he sat down suddenly, all of a heap, upon a stool, and continued laughing bitterly as though he would shake himself to pieces.

Montigny recovered his composure first.

" Let's see what he has about him," he remarked ; and he picked the dead man's pockets with a practised hand, and divided the money into four equal portions on the table. " There's for you," he said.

The monk received his share with a deep sigh, and a single stealthy glance at the dead Thevenin, who was beginning to sink into himself and topple sideways off the chair.

" We're all in for it," cried Villon, swallowing his mirth. " It's a hanging job for every man jack of us that's here—not to speak of those who aren't." He made a shocking gesture in the air with his raised right hand, and put out his tongue and threw his head on one side, so as to counterfeit the appearance of one who has been hanged. Then he pocketed his share of the spoil, and executed a shuffle with his feet as if to restore the circulation.

Tabary was the last to help himself ; he made a dash at the money, and retired to the other end of the apartment.

Montigny stuck Thevenin upright in the chair, and drew out the dagger, which was followed by a jet of blood.

" You fellows had better be moving," he said, as he wiped the blade on his victim's doublet.

" I think we had," returned Villon with a gulp. " Damn his fat head ! " he broke out. " It sticks in my throat like phlegm. What right has a man to have red hair when he is dead ? " And he fell all of a heap again upon the stool, and fairly covered his face with his hands.

Montigny and Dom Nicolas laughed aloud, even Tabary feebly chiming in.

" Cry baby," said the monk.

" I always said he was a woman," added Montigny with a sneer. " Sit up, can't you ? " he went on, giving another shake to the murdered body. " Tread out that fire, Nick ! "

But Nick was better employed ; he was quietly taking Villon's

purse, as the poet sat, limp and trembling, on the stool where he had been making a ballade not three minutes before. Montigny and Tabary dumbly demanded a share of the booty, which the monk silently promised as he passed the little bag into the bosom of his gown. In many ways an artistic nature unfits a man for practical existence.

No sooner had the theft been accomplished than Villon shook himself, jumped to his feet, and began helping to scatter and extinguish the embers. Meanwhile Montigny opened the door and cautiously peered into the street. The coast was clear ; there was no meddlesome patrol in sight. Still it was judged wiser to slip out severally ; and as Villon was himself in a hurry to escape from the neighbourhood of the dead Thevenin, and the rest were in a still greater hurry to get rid of him before he should discover the loss of his money, he was the first by general consent to issue forth into the street.

The wind had triumphed and swept all the clouds from heaven. Only a few vapours, as thin as moonlight, fleeted rapidly across the stars. It was bitter cold ; and by a common optical effect, things seemed almost more definite than in the broadest daylight. The sleeping city was absolutely still : a company of white hoods, a field full of little Alps, below the twinkling stars. Villon cursed his fortune. Would it were still snowing ! Now, wherever he went, he left an indelible trail behind him on the glittering streets ; wherever he went he was still tethered to the house by the cemetery of St. John ; wherever he went he must weave, with his own plodding feet, the rope that bound him to the crime and would bind him to the gallows. The leer of the dead man came back to him with a new significance. He snapped his fingers as if to pluck up his own spirits, and choosing a street at random, stepped boldly forward in the snow.

Two things preoccupied him as he went : the aspect of the gallows at Montfaucon in this bright windy phase of the night's existence, for one ; and for another, the look of the dead man with his bald head and garland of red curls. Both struck cold upon his heart, and he kept quickening his pace as if he could escape from unpleasant thoughts by mere fleetness of foot. Sometimes he looked back over his shoulder with a sudden nervous jerk ; but he was the only moving thing in the white streets, except when the wind swooped round a corner and threw up the snow, which was beginning to freeze, in spouts of glittering dust.

Suddenly he saw, a long way before him, a black clump and a

couple of lanterns. The clump was in motion, and the lanterns swung as though carried by men walking. It was a patrol. And though it was merely crossing his line of march, he judged it wiser to get out of eyeshot as speedily as he could. He was not in the humour to be challenged, and he was conscious of making a very conspicuous mark upon the snow. Just on his left hand there stood a great hotel, with some turrets and a large porch before the door; it was half-ruinous, he remembered, and had long stood empty; and so he made three steps of it and jumped into the shelter of the porch. It was pretty dark inside, after the glimmer of the snowy streets, and he was groping forward with outspread hands, when he stumbled over some substance which offered an indescribable mixture of resistances, hard and soft, firm and loose. His heart gave a leap, and he sprang two steps back and stared dreadfully at the obstacle. Then he gave a little laugh of relief. It was only a woman, and she dead. He knelt beside her to make sure upon this latter point. She was freezing cold, and rigid like a stick. A little ragged finery fluttered in the wind about her hair, and her cheeks had been heavily rouged that same afternoon. Her pockets were quite empty; but in her stocking, underneath the garter, Villon found two of the small coins that went by the name of whites. It was little enough; but it was always something; and the poet was moved with a deep sense of pathos that she should have died before she had spent her money. That seemed to him a dark and pitiable mystery; and he looked from the coins in his hand to the dead woman, and back again to the coins, shaking his head over the riddle of man's life. Henry V. of England, dying at Vincennes just after he had conquered France, and this poor jade cut off by a cold draught in a great man's doorway, before she had time to spend her couple of whites—it seemed a cruel way to carry on the world. Two whites would have taken such a little while to squander; and yet it would have been one more good taste in the mouth, one more smack of the lips, before the devil got the soul, and the body was left to birds and vermin. He would like to use all his tallow before the light was blown out and the lantern broken.

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he was feeling, half mechanically, for his purse. Suddenly his heart stopped beating; a feeling of cold scales passed up the back of his legs, and a cold blow seemed to fall upon his scalp. He stood petrified for a moment; then he felt again with one feverish movement; and then his loss burst

upon him, and he was covered at once with perspiration. To spend-thrifts money is so living and actual—it is such a thin veil between them and their pleasures! There is only one limit to their fortune—that of time; and a spendthrift with only a few crowns is the Emperor of Rome until they are spent. For such a person to lose his money is to suffer the most shocking reverse, and fall from heaven to hell, from all to nothing, in a breath. And all the more if he has put his head in the halter for it; if he may be hanged to-morrow for that same purse, so dearly earned, so foolishly departed! Villon stood and cursed; he threw the two whites into the street; he shook his fist at heaven; he stamped, and was not horrified to find himself trampling the poor corpse. Then he began rapidly to retrace his steps towards the house beside the cemetery. He had forgotten all fear of the patrol, which was long gone by at any rate, and had no idea but that of his lost purse. It was in vain that he looked right and left upon the snow: nothing was to be seen. He had not dropped it in the streets. Had it fallen in the house? He would have liked dearly to go in and see; but the idea of the grisly occupant unmanned him. And he saw besides, as he drew near, that their efforts to put out the fire had been unsuccessful; on the contrary, it had broken into a blaze, and a changeful light played in the chinks of door and window, and revived his terror for the authorities and Paris gibbet.

He returned to the hotel with the porch, and groped about upon the snow for the money he had thrown away in his childish passion. But he could only find one white; the other had probably struck sideways and sunk deeply in. With a single white in his pocket, all his projects for a rousing night in some wild tavern vanished utterly away. And it was not only pleasure that fled laughing from his grasp; positive discomfort, positive pain, attacked him as he stood ruefully before the porch. His perspiration had dried upon him; and though the wind had now fallen, a binding frost was setting in stronger with every hour, and he felt benumbed and sick at heart. What was to be done? Late as was the hour, improbable as was success, he would try the house of his adopted father, the chaplain of St. Benoît.

He ran there all the way, and knocked timidly. There was no answer. He knocked again and again, taking heart with every stroke; and at last steps were heard approaching from within. A barred wicket fell open in the iron-studded door, and emitted a gush of yellow light.

"Hold up your face to the wicket," said the chaplain from within.

"It's only me," whimpered Villon.

"Oh, it's only you, is it?" returned the chaplain; and he cursed him with foul unpriestly oaths for disturbing him at such an hour, and bade him be off to hell, where he came from.

"My hands are blue to the wrist," pleaded Villon; "my feet are dead and full of twinges: my nose aches with the sharp air; the cold lies at my heart. I may be dead before morning. Only this once, father, and before God I will never ask again!"

"You should have come earlier," said the ecclesiastic coolly. "Young men require a lesson now and then." He shut the wicket and retired deliberately into the interior of the house.

Villon was beside himself; he beat upon the door with his hands and feet, and shouted hoarsely after the chaplain.

"Wormy old fox!" he cried. "If I had my hand under your twist, I would send you flying headlong into the bottomless pit."

A door shut in the interior, faintly audible to the poet down long passages. He passed his hand over his mouth with an oath. And then the humour of the situation struck him, and he laughed and looked lightly up to heaven, where the stars seemed to be winking over his discomfiture.

What was to be done? It looked very like a night in the frosty streets. The idea of the dead woman popped into his imagination, and gave him a hearty fright; what had happened to her in the early night might very well happen to him before morning. And he so young! and with such immense possibilities of disorderly amusement before him! He felt quite pathetic over the notion of his own fate, as if it had been some one else's, and made a little imaginative vignette of the scene in the morning when they should find his body.

He passed all his chances under review, turning the white between his thumb and forefinger. Unfortunately he was on bad terms with some old friends who would once have taken pity on him in such a plight. He had lampooned them in verses, he had beaten and cheated them; and yet now, when he was in so close a pinch, he thought there was at least one who might perhaps relent. It was a chance. It was worth trying at least, and he would go and see.

On the way, two little accidents happened to him which coloured his musings in a very different manner. For, first, he fell in with the track of a patrol, and walked in it for some hundred yards, although it

lay out of his direction. And this spirited him up; at least he had confused his trail; for he was still possessed with the idea of people tracking him all about Paris over the snow, and collaring him next morning before he was awake. The other matter affected him very differently. He passed a street corner, where, not so long before, a woman and her child had been devoured by wolves. This was just the kind of weather, he reflected, when wolves might take it into their heads to enter Paris again; and a lone man in these deserted streets would run the chance of something worse than a mere scare. He stopped and looked upon the place with an unpleasant interest—it was a centre where several lanes intersected each other; and he looked down them all one after another, and held his breath to listen, lest he should detect some galloping black things on the snow or hear the sound of howling between him and the river. He remembered his mother telling him the story and pointing out the spot, while he was yet a child. His mother! If he only knew where she lived, he might make sure at least of shelter. He determined he would inquire upon the morrow; nay, he would go and see her too, poor old girl! So thinking, he arrived at his destination—his last hope for the night.

The house was quite dark, like its neighbours, and yet after a few taps he heard a movement overhead, a door opening, and a cautious voice asking who was there. The poet named himself in a loud whisper, and waited, not without some trepidation, the result. Nor had he to wait long. A window was suddenly opened, and a pailful of slops splashed down upon the doorstep. Villon had not been unprepared for something of the sort, and had put himself as much in shelter as the nature of the porch admitted; but for all that, he was deplorably drenched below the waist. His hose began to freeze almost at once. Death from cold and exposure stared him in the face; he remembered he was of phthisical tendency, and began coughing tentatively. But the gravity of the danger steadied his nerves. He stopped a few hundred yards from the door where he had been so rudely used, and reflected with his finger to his nose. He could only see one way of getting a lodging, and that was to take it. He had noticed a house not far away, which looked as if it might be easily broken into, and thither he betook himself promptly, entertaining himself on the way with the idea of a room still hot, with a table still loaded with the remains of supper, where he might pass the rest of the black hours, and whence he should issue, on the morrow, with an armful of valuable

plate. He even considered on what viands and what wines he should prefer ; and as he was calling the roll of his favourite dainties, roast fish presented itself to his mind with an odd mixture of amusement and horror.

" I shall never finish that ballade," he thought to himself ; and then, with another shudder at the recollection, " Oh, damn his fat head ! " he repeated fervently, and spat upon the snow.

The house in question looked dark at first sight ; but as Villon made a preliminary inspection in search of the handiest point of attack, a little twinkle of light caught his eye from behind a curtained window.

" The devil ! " he thought. " People awake ! Some student or some saint, confound the crew ! Can't they get drunk and lie in bed snoring like their neighbours ! What's the good of curfew, and poor devils of bell-ringers jumping at a rope's end in bell-towers ? What's the use of day, if people sit up all night ? The gripes to them ! " He grinned as he saw where his logic was leading him. " Every man to his business, after all," added he, " and if they're awake, by the Lord, I may come by a supper honestly for this once, and cheat the devil."

He went boldly to the door and knocked with an assured hand. On both previous occasions he had knocked timidly and with some dread of attracting notice ; but now when he had just discarded the thought of a burglarious entry, knocking at a door seemed a mighty simple and innocent proceeding. The sound of his blows echoed through the house with thin, phantasmal reverberations, as though it were quite empty ; but these had scarcely died away before a measured tread drew near, a couple of bolts were withdrawn, and one wing was opened broadly, as though no guile or fear of guile were known to those within. A tall figure of a man, muscular and spare, but a little bent, confronted Villon. The head was massive in bulk, but finely sculptured ; the nose blunt at the bottom, but refining upward to where it joined a pair of strong and honest eyebrows ; the mouth and eyes surrounded with delicate markings, and the whole face based upon a thick white beard, boldly and squarely trimmed. Seen as it was by the light of a flickering hand-lamp, it looked perhaps nobler than it had a right to do ; but it was a fine face, honourable rather than intelligent, strong, simple, and righteous.

" You knock late, sir," said the old man in resonant, courteous tones.

Villon cringed, and brought up many servile words of apology ;

at a crisis of this sort, the beggar was uppermost in him, and the man of genius hid his head with confusion.

"You are cold," repeated the old man, "and hungry? Well, step in." And he ordered him into the house with a noble enough gesture.

"Some great seigneur," thought Villon, as his host, setting down the lamp on the flagged pavement of the entry, shot the bolts once more into their places.

"You will pardon me if I go in front," he said, when this was done; and he preceded the poet upstairs into a large apartment, warmed with a pan of charcoal and lit by a great lamp hanging from the roof. It was very bare of furniture: only some gold plate on a sideboard; some folios; and a stand of armour between the windows. Some smart tapestry hung upon the walls, representing the crucifixion of our Lord in one piece, and in another a scene of shepherds and shepherdesses by a running stream. Over the chimney was a shield of arms.

"Will you seat yourself," said the old man, "and forgive me if I leave you? I am alone in my house to-night, and if you are to eat I must forage for you myself."

No sooner was his host gone than Villon leaped from the chair on which he had just seated himself, and began examining the room, with the stealth and passion of a cat. He weighed the gold flagons in his hand, opened all the folios, and investigated the arms upon the shield, and the stuff with which the seats were lined. He raised the window curtains, and saw that the windows were set with rich stained glass in figures, so far as he could see, of martial import. Then he stood in the middle of the room, drew a long breath, and retaining it with puffed cheeks, looked round and round him, turning on his heels, as if to impress every feature of the apartment on his memory.

"Seven pieces of plate," he said. "If there had been ten, I would have risked it. A fine house, and a fine old master, so help me all the saints!"

And just then, hearing the old man's tread returning along the corridor, he stole back to his chair, and began humbly toasting his wet legs before the charcoal pan.

His entertainer had a plate of meat in one hand and a jug of wine in the other. He set down the plate upon the table, motioning Villon to draw in his chair, and going to the sideboard, brought back two goblets, which he filled.

"I drink to your better fortune," he said, gravely touching Villon's cup with his own.

"To our better acquaintance," said the poet, growing bold. A mere man of the people would have been awed by the courtesy of the old seigneur, but Villon was hardened in that matter; he had made mirth for great lords before now, and found them as black rascals as himself. And so he devoted himself to the viands with a ravenous gusto, while the old man, leaning backward, watched him with steady, curious eyes.

"You have blood on your shoulder, my man," he said.

Montigny must have laid his wet right hand upon him as he left the house. He cursed Montigny in his heart.

"It was none of my shedding," he stammered.

"I had not supposed so," returned his host quietly. "A brawl?"

"Well, something of that sort," Villon admitted with a quaver.

"Perhaps a fellow murdered?"

"Oh no, not murdered," said the poet, more and more confused.

"It was all fair play—murdered by accident. I had no hand in it, God strike me dead!" he added fervently.

"One rogue the fewer, I dare say," observed the master of the house.

"You may dare to say that," agreed Villon, infinitely relieved.

"As big a rogue as there is between here and Jerusalem. He turned up his toes like a lamb. But it was a nasty thing to look at. I dare say you've seen dead men in your time, my lord?" he added, glancing at the armour.

"Many," said the old man. "I have followed the wars, as you imagine."

Villon laid down his knife and fork, which he had just taken up again.

"Were any of them bald?" he asked.

"Oh yes, and with hair as white as mine."

"I don't think I should mind the white so much," said Villon.

"His was red." And he had a return of his shuddering and tendency to laughter, which he drowned with a great draught of wine. "I'm a little put out when I think of it," he went on. "I knew him—damn him! And then the cold gives a man fancies—or the fancies give a man cold, I don't know which."

"Have you any money?" asked the old man.

"I have one white," returned the poet, laughing. "I got it out of a dead jade's stocking in a porch. She was as dead as Caesar, poor

wench, and as cold as a church, with bits of ribbon sticking in her hair. This is a hard world in winter for wolves and wenches and poor rogues like me."

"I," said the old man, "am Enguerrand de la Feuillée, seigneur de Brisetout, bailly du Patatrac. Who and what may you be?"

Villon rose and made a suitable reverence. "I am called Francis Villon," he said, "a poor Master of Arts of this university. I know some Latin, and a deal of vice. I can make chansons, ballades, lais, virelais, and roundels, and I am very fond of wine. I was born in a garret, and I shall not improbably die upon the gallows. I may add, my lord, that from this night forward I am your lordship's very obsequious servant to command."

"No servant of mine," said the knight; "my guest for this evening, and no more."

"A very grateful guest," said Villon politely; and he drank in dumb show to his entertainer.

"You are shrewd," began the old man, tapping his forehead, "very shrewd; you have learning; you are a clerk; and yet you take a small piece of money off a dead woman in the street. Is it not a kind of theft?"

"It is a kind of theft much practised in the wars, my lord."

"The wars are the field of honour," returned the old man proudly. "There a man plays his life upon the cast; he fights in the name of his lord the king, his Lord God, and all their lordships the holy saints and angels."

"Put it," said Villon, "that I were really a thief, should I not play my life also, and against heavier odds?"

"For gain, but not for honour."

"Gain?" repeated Villon with a shrug. "Gain! The poor fellow wants supper, and takes it. So does the soldier in a campaign. Why, what are all these requisitions we hear so much about? If they are not gain to those who take them, they are loss enough to the others. The men-at-arms drink by a good fire, while the burgher bites his nails to buy them wine and wood. I have seen a good many ploughmen swinging on trees about the country; ay, I have seen thirty on one elm, and a very poor figure they made; and when I asked some one how all these came to be hanged, I was told it was because they could not scrape together enough crowns to satisfy the men-at-arms."

"These things are a necessity of war, which the low-born must endure with constancy. It is true that some captains drive overhard; there are spirits in every rank not easily moved by pity; and indeed many follow arms who are no better than brigands."

"You see," said the poet, "you cannot separate the soldier from the brigand; and what is a thief but an isolated brigand with circumspect manners? I steal a couple of mutton chops, without so much as disturbing people's sleep; the farmer grumbles a bit, but sups none the less wholesomely on what remains. You come up blowing gloriously on a trumpet, take away the whole sheep, and beat the farmer pitifully into the bargain. I have no trumpet; I am only Tom, Dick, or Harry; I am a rogue and a dog, and hanging's too good for me—with all my heart; but just you ask the farmer which of us he prefers, just find out which of us he lies awake to curse on cold nights."

"Look at us two," said his lordship. "I am old, strong, and honoured. If I were turned from my house to-morrow, hundreds would be proud to shelter me. Poor people would go out and pass the night in the streets with their children, if I merely hinted that I wished to be alone. And I find you up, wandering homeless, and picking farthings off dead women by the wayside! I fear no man and nothing; I have seen you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God's summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me out again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows; a rough, swift death, without hope or honour. Is there no difference between these two?"

"As far as to the moon," Villon acquiesced. "But if I had been born lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should not I have been warming my knees at this charcoal pan, and would not you have been groping for farthings in the snow? Should not I have been the soldier, and you the thief?"

"A thief!" cried the old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words, you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honour to follow my argument!" he said.

"I do you too much honour in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honourable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in

a sharper fashion." And he rose and paced the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup, and settled himself more comfortably in the chair, crossing his knees and leaning his head upon one hand and the elbow against the back of the chair. He was now replete and warm; and he was in nowise frightened for his host, having gauged him as justly as was possible between two such different characters. The night was far spent, and in a very comfortable fashion after all; and he felt morally certain of a safe departure on the morrow.

"Tell me one thing," said the old man, pausing in his walk. "Are you really a thief?"

"I claim the sacred rights of hospitality," returned the poet. "My lord, I am."

"You are very young," the knight continued.

"I should never have been so old," replied Villon, showing his fingers, "if I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers."

"You may still repent and change."

"I repent daily," said the poet. "There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent."

"The change must begin in the heart," returned the old man solemnly.

"My dear lord," answered Villon, "do you really fancy that I steal for pleasure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal—*Cui Deus foeminam tradit*. Make me king's pantler—make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patatrac; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same."

"The grace of God is all-powerful."

"I should be a heretic to question it," said Francis. "It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly of the Patatrac; it has given me nothing but the quick wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully. By God's grace, you have a very superior vintage."

The lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers ; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy ; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning ; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better way of thinking, and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

" There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. " Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray ; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honour, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady ; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will take care to read. You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure ; but you do not speak of other wants ; you say nothing of honour, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise—and yet I think I am—but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring a toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honour and love and faith are not only nobler than food and drink, but indeed I think that we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not, while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart, which spoils the pleasure of your life and keeps you continually wretched ? "

Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonising. " You think I have no sense of honour ! " he cried. " I'm poor enough, God knows ! It's hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Any way, I'm a thief—make the most of that—but I'm not a devil from hell, God strike me dead ! I would have you

to know I've an honour of my own, as good as yours, though I don't prate about it all day long, as if it was a God's miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me ; I keep it in its box till it's wanted. Why now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you ? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house ? Look at your gold plate ! You're strong, if you like, but you're old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of gold cups ! Did you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that ? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets, as safe as in a church ; there are you, with your heart ticking as good as new ; and here am I, ready to go out again as poor as I came in, with my one white that you threw in my teeth ! And you think I have no sense of honour—God strike me dead ! ”

The old man stretched out his right arm. “ I will tell you what you are,” he said. “ You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and a black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh ! believe me, I feel myself disgraced ! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence ; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after ? ”

“ Which you please,” returned the poet, rising. “ I believe you to be strictly honourable.” He thoughtfully emptied his cup. “ I wish I could add you were intelligent,” he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. “ Age, age ! the brains stiff and rheumatic.”

The old man preceded him from a point of self-respect ; Villon followed, whistling, with his thumbs in his girdle.

“ God pity you,” said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

“ Good-bye, papa,” returned Villon with a yawn. “ Many thanks for the cold mutton.”

The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road.

“ A very dull old gentleman,” he thought. “ I wonder what his goblets may be worth ’

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

DENIS DE BEAULIEU was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, warfaring epoch ; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honourable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation ; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the grey of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command ; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September 1429 ; the weather had fallen sharp ; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township ; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up ; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly ; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door ; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight before he said good-bye upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile ; the night was as black as the grave ; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis

was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Chateau Landon ; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way ; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill ; for his friend's house lay at the lower end, or tail, of Chateau Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clue to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad ; the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth ; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambuscade or a chasm in the pathway ; and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering appearances, as if to lead him farther from his way. For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk ; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall with either hand, when it began to open out and go sharply downward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn ; but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoitre. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could discern a few tree-tops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions ; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops ; the round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block ; and the door was sheltered under a deep porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the

hotel of some great family of the neighbourhood ; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it ; he could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabouts, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all others in his career ; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing narrows of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiring but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected ; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his footsteps with their own empty voices. If he were but silent and fleet he might evade their notice altogether.

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble ; he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there—some in French, some in English ; but Denis made no reply, and ran the faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armour, and great tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defence. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise, it yielded behind his weight ; and though he turned in a moment, continued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges, until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fall out opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why, his own immediate personal convenience seeming a suffi-

cient reason for the strangest oddities and revolutions in our sublunary things ; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether ; but for some inexplicable reason—perhaps by a spring or a weight—the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners ; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood ; but these gentlemen were in too high a humour to be long delayed, and soon made off down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis's observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes' grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth, not a handle, not a moulding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door ? he wondered. Why was it open ? How came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him ? There was something obscure and underhand about all this that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare ; and yet who could suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior ? And yet—snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally—here he was, prettily trapped ; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear ; all was silent without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak—as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house—a vertical thread of light, widening towards the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis ; it was like a piece of solid ground to a

man labouring in a morass ; his mind seized upon it with avidity ; and he stood staring at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of this illuminated doorway ; and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a handrail. Since he had begun to suspect that he was not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smothering violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort had possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, he believed. What could be more natural than to mount the staircase, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once ? At least he would be dealing with something tangible ; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom step ; then he rapidly scaled the stairs, stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went in.

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone. There were three doors ; one on each of three sides ; all similarly curtained with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two large windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Malétroits. Denis recognised the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated ; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was innocent of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

On a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman in a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of spiced wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast ; not properly human, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar ; something equivocal and wheedling, something greedy, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was inordinately full, as though swollen by a blow or a toothache ; and the smile, the peaked eyebrows, and the small, strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beautiful white hair hung straight all round his head, like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and moustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands ; and the Malétroit hand was famous.

It would be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design ; the taper, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women ; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed ; the nails were perfectly shaped, and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded in his lap like a virgin martyr—that a man with so intense and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Malétroit.

Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

" Pray step in," said the Sire de Malétroit. " I have been expecting you all the evening."

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile, and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

" I fear," he said, " that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit ; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts—nothing could be more contrary to my wishes—than this intrusion."

" Well, well," replied the old gentleman indulgently, " here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend, and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently."

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanations.

" Your door . . ." he began.

" About my door ? " asked the other, raising his peaked eyebrows. " A little piece of ingenuity." And he shrugged his shoulders. " A hospitable fancy ! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then ; and when it touches our honour, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited, but believe me, very welcome."

"You persist in error, sir," said Denis. "There can be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this countryside. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only——"

"My young friend," interrupted the other, "you will permit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment," he added with a leer, "but time will show which of us is in the right."

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged, sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

"Sir," he said, "if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter myself I can find better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword."

The Sire de Malétroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended.

"My dear nephew," he said, "sit down."

"Nephew!" retorted Denis, "you lie in your throat"; and he snapped his fingers in his face.

"Sit down, you rogue!" cried the old gentleman, in a sudden,

harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. "Do you fancy," he went on, "that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? If you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman—why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you."

"Do you mean I am a prisoner?" demanded Denis.

"I state the facts," replied the other. "I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself."

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm; but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God's name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical adventure had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Malétroit.

"She is in a better frame of spirit?" asked the latter.

"She is more resigned, messire," replied the priest.

"Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!" sneered the old gentleman. "A likely stripling—not ill-born—and of her own choosing, too? Why, what more would the jade have?"

"The situation is not usual for a young damsel," said the other, "and somewhat trying to her blushes."

"She should have thought of that before she began the dance? It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our lady, she shall carry it to the end." And then addressing Denis, "Monsieur de Beaulieu," he asked, "may I present you to my niece? She has been waiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself."

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Malétroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain's arm, towards the chapel-door. The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich

pendants from the centre of the vault. The place terminated behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about ; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride. A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume ; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was being thrust upon his mind ; it could not—it should not—be as he feared.

“ Blanche,” said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, “ I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl ; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout ; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece.”

The girl rose to her feet and turned towards the new-comers. She moved all of a piece ; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body ; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu’s feet—feet of which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accoutrement even while travelling. She paused—started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning—and glanced suddenly up into the wearer’s countenance. Their eyes met ; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks ; the blood left her lips ; with a piercing scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

“ That is not the man ! ” she cried. “ My uncle ; that is not the man ! ”

The Sire de Malétroit chirped agreeably. “ Of course not,” he said, “ I expected as much. It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name.”

“ Indeed,” she cried, “ indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment—I have never so much as set eyes upon him—I never wish to see him again. Sir,” she said, turning to Denis, “ if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you—have you ever seen me—before this accursed hour ? ”

“ To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure,” answered

the young man. "This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece."

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"I am distressed to hear it," he said. "But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves," he added, with a grimace, "that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long-run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony." And he turned towards the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. "My uncle, you cannot be in earnest," she said. "I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbids such marriages; you dishonour your white hair. Oh, my uncle, pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible," she added, faltering—"is it possible that you do not believe me—that you still think this"—and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt—"that you still think *this* to be the man?"

"Frankly," said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, "I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Malétroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonour my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than threescore years, you forfeited, not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was my duty to get you married without delay. Out of pure goodwill, I have tried to find your own gallant for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Malétroit, if I have not, I care not one jack-straw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be less appetising."

And with that he went out, with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes.

"And what, sir," she demanded, "may be the meaning of all this?"

"God knows," returned Denis gloomily. "I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad people. More I know not; and nothing do I understand."

"And pray how came you here?" she asked.

He told her as briefly as he could. "For the rest," he added, "perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God's name, is like to be the end of it."

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish lustre. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

"Alas, how my head aches!" she said wearily—"to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story, unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Malétroit: I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that any one should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me." She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. "My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd," she said at last. "He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came from mass, he took my hand in his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while. When he had finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have

been trifling with me from the first ; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such a shameful punishment as this ! I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I have told you all ; and I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me."

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

"Madam," he said, "you have honoured me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honour. Is Messire de Malétroit at hand ?"

"I believe he is writing in the *salle* without," she answered.

"May I lead you thither, madam ?" asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it ; and the pair passed out of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefast condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honour.

The Sire de Malétroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance.

"Sir," said Denis, with the grandest possible air, "I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage ; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful ; but as things are, I have now the honour, messire, of refusing."

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes ; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening to Denis.

"I am afraid," he said, "Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not perfectly understand the choice I have to offer you. Follow me, I beseech you, to this window." And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. "You observe," he went on, "there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and reeved through that a very efficacious rope. Now, mark my words : if you should find your disinclination to my niece's person insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way ; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a

Malétroit with impunity—not if she had been as common as the Paris road—not if she were as hideous as the gargoyle over my door. Neither my niece nor you, nor my own private feelings, move me at all in this matter. The honour of my house has been compromised ; I believe you to be the guilty person ; at least you are now in the secret ; and you can hardly wonder if I request you to wipe out the stain. If you will not, your blood be on your own head ! It will be no great satisfaction to me to have your interesting relics kicking their heels in the breeze below my windows ; but half a loaf is better than no bread, and if I cannot cure the dishonour, I shall at least stop the scandal.”

There was a pause.

“ I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen,” said Denis. “ You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction.”

The Sire de Malétroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a moment before he let it fall again ; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.

“ When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honour you, Monsieur de Beaulieu,” said Sire Alain ; “ but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years ; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the salle for what remains of your two hours ; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste ! ” he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu’s face. “ If your mind revolts against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And, besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has still something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady ? ”

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding ; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly : “ If you will give me your word of honour, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to await my return at the end of the two hours before

attempting anything desperate, I shall withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with mademoiselle."

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree.

"I give you my word of honour," he said.

Messire de Malétroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly, he hobbled out through the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced towards Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

"You shall not die!" she cried, "you shall marry me after all."

"You seem to think, madam," replied Denis, "that I stand much in fear of death."

"Oh no, no," she said, "I see you are no poltroon. It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple."

"I am afraid," returned Denis, "that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept. In a moment of noble feeling towards me, you forgot what you perhaps owe to others."

He had the decency to keep his eyes upon the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and falling on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat, playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment, but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so baldly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows, that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche

de Malétroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured ; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals ; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running, and death was on the march.

Oftener and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, so plump and yet so fine, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her uncle's ; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature ; and now he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cockcrow rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence of all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

"Alas, can I do nothing to help you ? " she said, looking up.

"Madam," replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, "if I have said anything to wound you, believe me, it was for your own sake and not for mine."

She thanked him with a tearful look.

"I feel your position cruelly," he went on. "The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a disgrace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity, to die in doing you a momentary service."

"I know already that you can be very brave and generous," she answered. "What I *want* to know is whether I can serve you—now or afterwards," she added, with a quaver.

"Most certainly," he answered, with a smile. "Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder ; try to forget

how awkwardly we are placed to one another ; make my last moments go pleasantly ; and you will do me the chief service possible."

" You are very gallant," she added, with a yet deeper sadness . . . " very gallant . . . and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please ; and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah ! Monsieur de Beaulieu," she broke forth—" ah ! Monsieur de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face ? " And she fell to weeping again with a renewed effusion.

" Madam," said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, " reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life."

" I am very selfish," answered Blanche. " I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future—if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieux. Charge me as heavily as you can ; every burden will lighten, by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep."

" My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs ; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapour that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him ; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of window as he rides into town before his company ; he receives many assurances of trust and regard—sometimes by express in a letter—sometimes face to face, with persons of great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that any one of them, nor so much as the name of the fight is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner, where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the judgment day. I have few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none."

" Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu ! " she exclaimed, " you forget Blanche de Malétroit."

" You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth."

" It is not that," she answered. " You mistake me if you think I am so easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met ; because I recognise in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land."

" And yet here I die in a mousetrap—with no more noise about it than my own squeaking," answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes, and with a smile she spoke again.

" I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Any one who gives his life for another will be met in Paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For . . . Pray, do you think me beautiful ? " she asked, with a deep flush.

" Indeed, madam, I do," he said.

" I am glad of that," she answered heartily. " Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden—with her own lips—and who have refused her to her face ? I know you men would half despise such a triumph ; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem ; and we women would prize nothing more dearly."

" You are very good," he said ; " but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love."

" I am not so sure of that," she replied, holding down her head. " Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me ; I feel you are right to do so ; I am too poor a creature to occupy one thought of your mind, although, alas ! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed, and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you, and loved you with my whole soul, from the very moment that you took my part against my uncle. If you had seen yourself, and how noble you looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now," she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, " although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments towards me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride

of my own : and I declare before the holy mother of God, if you should now go back from your word already given, I would no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom."

Denis smiled a little bitterly.

"It is a small love," he said, "that shies at a little pride."

She made no answer, although she probably had her own thoughts.

"Come hither to the window," he said, with a sigh. "Here is the dawn."

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The hollow of the sky was full of essential daylight, colourless and clean ; and the valley underneath was flooded with a grey reflection. A few thin vapours clung in the coves of the forest or lay along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steadings. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a clangour in the darkness not half-an-hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the tree-tops underneath the windows. And still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, which was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun.

Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand, and retained it in his almost unconsciously.

"Has the day begun already ?" she said ; and then, illogically enough : "the night has been so long ! Alas ! what shall we say to my uncle when he returns ?"

"What you will," said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in his.

She was silent.

"Blanche," he said, with a swift, uncertain, passionate utterance, "you have seen whether I fear death. You must know well enough that I would as gladly leap out of that window into the empty air as lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all do not let me lose my life in a misapprehension ; for I love you better than the whole world ; and though I will die for you blithely, it would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service."

As he stopped speaking, a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house ; and a clatter of armour in the corridor showed that the

retainers were returning to their post, and the two hours were at an end.

"After all that you have heard?" she whispered, leaning towards him with her lips and eyes.

"I have heard nothing," he replied.

"The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers," she said in his ear.

"I did not hear it," he answered, taking her supple body in his arms, and covered her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a beautiful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Malétroit wished his new nephew a good morning.

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

B. 1852

SNAEKOLL'S SAGA

THORGRIMUR HJALTALIN was known throughout all Rangarvallar, down to Krusavik, up to Akureyri, and in fact all over Iceland, for his wandering disposition, his knowledge of the Sagas, and for his horse called "Snaekoll." He lived in Upper Horgsdalr, near the Skaptar Jokull, and from his green "tun" were seen the peaks of Skaptar Jokull, Orœfar, and the white cordillera of the vast icy Vatna.

A Scandinavian of the Scandinavians, Thorgrimur was tall and angular, red-bearded, yellow-haired, grey-eyed, and as deliberate in all his movements as befits an Icelfander, compared to whom the Spaniards, Turks, Chinese, or Cholos of the Sierras of Peru are active, quick in design and movement, and mercurial in mind.

His house was built of Norway pine with door jambs of hard wood, floated almost to his home from the New World. Unlike most Icelfanders, he had not profited too much by education, leaving Greek, Latin, and the "humanities" in general for those who liked them; but of the Sagas he was passionately fond, reading and learning them by heart, copying them out of books in the long evenings whilst his family sat working round the lamp on winter nights after the fashion of their land.

People were wont to say he was descended from some Berserker, he was so silent and yet so subject to sudden fits of passion, which came on generally after a fit of laughter, ending in wrath or tears. Berserkers, not a few, had lived in Rangarvallar, and it may be that moral qualities become endemic in localities, in the same way that practices still cling to places, as in Rome and Oxford and some other towns where the air seems vitiated by the breath of generations long gone past.

Thus, in the future, when the taint of commerce has been purged away and the world cleansed from all the baseness commerce brings, it may be that for some generations those born in London, Liverpool, in Glasgow and New York, will for a time be more dishonest than their

fellows born in cities where trade did not so greatly flourish, and so of other things.

Thorgrimur was married and had children, as he had sheep, cattle, poultry, dogs, and all the other requisites of country life. But wife and children occupied but little of his mind, though after the fashion of his countrymen he was kind and gentle to them, sought no other women, did not get drunk, gamble, or regulate his conduct upon the pattern of the husbands of more favoured lands. All his delight was to read Sagas, to dream of expeditions through the great deserts of his country, and his chief care was centred in his horses, and most especially in "Snaekoll," his favourite, known, like himself, for his peculiarities.

Whilst there are camels in the desert, llamas in Peru, reindeer in Lapland, dogs in Greenland, and caiques amongst the Esquimaux, Iceland will have its ponies, who on those "Pampas of the North" will still perform the services done by the mustangs of the plains of Mexico, the horses of the Tartars, Gauchos, and even more than is performed by any animal throughout the world. Without the ponies Iceland would be impossible to live in, and when the last expires the Icelanders have two alternatives—either to emigrate *en masse*, or to construct a system of highways for bicycles, an undertaking compared to which all undertaken by the Romans and the Incas of Peru in the same sphere would be as nothing.

No Iclander will walk a step if he can help it; when he dismounts he waddles like an alligator on land, a Texan cowboy, or a Gaucho left "afoot," or like the Medes whom Plutarch represents as tottering on their toes when they dismounted from their saddles and essayed to walk. Ponies are carts, are sledges, carriages, trains—in short, are locomotion and the only means of transport: bales of salt fish, packages of goods, timber projecting yards above their heads and trailing on the ground behind like Indian lodge poles, they convey across the rocky lava tracks. The farmer and his wife, his children, servants, the priest, the doctor, "Syselman," all ride, cross rivers on the ponies' backs, plunge through the snow, slide on the icy "Jokull" paths, and when the lonely dweller of some upland dale expires, his pony bears his body in its coffin tied to its back, to the next consecrated ground.

So Thorgrimur loved "Snaekoll," and was proud of all his qualities, his size, for "Snaekoll" almost attained to fourteen hands, a giant stature amongst the ponies of his race. In colour he was iron-grey,

with a white foot on either side, so that his rider had the satisfaction of riding on a cross, fierce-tempered, bad to mount, a kicker at the stirrup, biter, unrideable by strangers, but, as Thorgrimur said, an "ice-eater"; that is, able to live on nothing and dig for lichens on the rocks when snow lay deep, to feed upon salt cod or on dried whale beef, and for that reason not quite safe to leave alone with sheep when they had lambs. But for all that Thorgrimur did not care, and never grudged a lamb or two when he reflected that his horse could go his fifty miles a day for a whole week, and at the end be just as fresh as when he left the "tun."

Thick-necked, stifi-jawed, straight pasterns, high in the withers, square in the croup, mane like a bottle-brush, tail long and thick, "Snaekoll" had certainly few points of beauty: still, as he stood nodding beneath his Danish saddle, hobbled with whale-hide hobbles, shod with shoes made by Thorgrimur himself, stuck full of large round-headed nails and made long at the heel and curving up near to the coronet to protect his feet in crossing lava-fields, he had a gleam in his red eyes like a bull terrier, which warned the stranger not to come too near. This was a source of pride to Thorgrimur, who used to say, with many quite superfluous "hellvites," that his horse was fit for "Grettir, Burnt Njal, or Viga Glum to ride"; then, mounting him, he used to dash full speed over a lava-field, sending a shower of sparks under his feet, cracking his whale-hide whip, and stopping "Snaekoll" with a jerk whilst sitting loosely with his legs stuck out after the fashion of all horsemen when they know they are observed.

To cross the Vatna Jokull, the great icy desert, which extends between the top of Rangarvallar and the east coast of Berufjördr, was Thorgrimur's day-dream. Others had journeyed over deserts, crossed Jokulls, as the icy upland wastes of Iceland are called, but in his time no one had yet been found to cross the Vatna. Now this idea was ever present in his brain during his lonely rides in summer from his home to Reykjavik, from thence to Krusavik, or as he jogged across the lava-fields or crossed the tracts on which grew birch and mountain ash a foot in height, which constitute an Icelandic forest; and in the winter, in the long, dark hours, he could not drive it from his head. Men came to laugh at him, as men will laugh at those who have ideas of any kind, and call him "Thorgrimur of Vatna Jokull, the Berserker of Rangarvallar," and the like, but none laughed openly, for Thorgrimur was hasty in his wrath, and apt to draw his whale knife, or at least spur

his horse "Snaekoll" at the laughers' horse, as he had been a fighter in the ancient horse fights, and it was lucky if the horse that "Snaekoll" set upon escaped without some hurt.

In fact the man was a survival, or at the least an instance, of atavism strongly developed, or would have been so styled in England; but in Iceland all such niceties were not observed, and his compatriots merely called him mad, being convinced of their own sanity, as men who make good wages, go to church, observe the weather and the stocks, read books for pastime, marry and have large families, pay such debts as the law forces them to pay, and never think on abstract matters, always are convinced in every land.

Think on the matter for a moment, and at once it is apparent they are right.

The world is to the weak. The weak are the majority. The weak of brain, of body, the knock-kneed and flat-footed, muddle-minded, loose-jointed, ill-put-together, baboon-faced, the white-eye-lashed, slow of wit, the practical, the unimaginative, forgetful, selfish, dense, the stupid, fatuous, the "candle-moulded," give us our laws, impose their standard on us, their ethics, their philosophy, canon of art, literary style, their jingling music, vapid plays, their dock-tailed horses, coats with buttons in the middle of the back; their hideous fashions, aniline colours, their Leaders, Leightons, Logsdails; their false morality, their supplemented monogamic marriage, social injustice done to women; legal injustice that men endure, making them fearful of the law, even with a good case when the opponent is a woman; in sum, the monstrous ineptitude of modern life with all its inequalities, its meannesses, its petty miseries, contagious diseases, its drink, its gambling, Grundy, Stock Exchange, and terror of itself, we owe to those, our pug-nosed brothers in the Lord, under whose rule we live.

Wise Providence, no doubt, has thus ordained it, so that each one of us can see the folly of mankind, and fancy that ourselves alone are strong, are wise, are prudent, faithful, handsome, artistic, to be loved, are poets (with the gift of rhyme left out), critics of music, literature, of eloquence, good business men and generally so constituted as to be fit to rule mankind had not some cursed spite, to man's great detriment, cozened us out of our just due. So Thorgrimur was mad, and pondered on the crossing of the Vatna, day by day; not that he thought of profit or of fame—your true explorer thinks of neither.

But like a wild goose making north in spring, or as a swallow flying south without a chart to shape his voyage by ; or as a Seychelle coconut adrift upon some oceanic current all unknown to it, your true explorer must explore, just as the painter paints, the poet sings, or as the sworn Salvationist must try to save a soul, and in the trying lose perhaps his only friend—a perilous business when one thinks that souls are many, friends are few.

And still the Vatna Jokull filled Thorgrimur's imagination. Surely, to be alone in those great deserts would be wonderful, the stars must needs look brighter so far away from houses, the grass in the lone valleys greener where no animal had cropped it, and then to sleep alone with "Snaekoll" securely hobbled, feeding near at hand ; and, lastly—for Thorgrimur was not devoid of true Icelandic pride—the arrival one fine morning at the first houses above Berufjördr, calling for milk at the farm door, and saying airily, in answer to the inquiry from whence he came, from Rangarvallar, across the Vatna. That would indeed be worth a lifetime of mere living, after all.

Needless to say that no one in the time of Thorgrimur had ever passed over the Vatna from Rangarvallar, though the Heimskringla seemed to indicate that at the first settlement there had been such a road. Reindeer were known to haunt the wild recesses of the desert track, and some said, ponies long escaped had there run wild, and all were well aware that evil spirits haunted the valleys, for there the older gods had all retired when Christianity had triumphed in the land.

Two hundred miles in distance, but then the miles were mortal, without food, perhaps no water, without a guide, except the compass and the stars. Seven days' ride on "Snaekoll," if all went well, and if it did not, why then as well to sleep alone amongst the mountains, as in the fat churchyard, for there men when they see your headstone growing green forget you, but he who dies in the lone Vatna surely keeps his memory ever fresh.

All through the winter, Thorgrimur talked ceaselessly about the execution of his dream. In spring, when grass is green and horses fat, when forests of dwarf birch and willow look like fields of corn, ice disappears and valleys as by magic are all clothed with grass, he made all boune to set out on his long-projected ride. "Snaekoll is eight years old (he said) and in his prime, sound both in wind and limb, and I am thirty, and if we cannot now prove ourselves of the true Icelandic

breed the time will never come, old age will catch us both still scheming, still a-planning, and men will say that had we lived among the Icelanders of old, Snaekoll had been of no use at the horse-fighting, and I, instead of going a sea-roaming with Viga Glum, with Harold Fair-Hair, Askarpillir, with Asgrim, and the rest, would have remained at home and helped the women spin." His wife, after the practical way of womenkind, thought him a fool, but yet admired him, for she imagined that Thorgrimur in reading Sagas had come upon the whereabouts of some great treasure buried in times gone by, for she could not imagine that a man would risk his life without good reason, being all unaware that generally lives are risked and lost without a cause. Perhaps, too, she was willing enough for Thorgrimur to go, his musings, readings, wanderings, and uncanny ways rendering him an unpleasant inmate of the house.

But Thorgrimur cared nothing, or perhaps knew nothing of her speculations, but got his saddle freshly stuffed, made whale-hide reins strong, new, and six feet long ; purveyed a long hair rope, new hobbles, and for himself new whale-hide shoes like Indians' mocassins, new wadmál clothes, and laid up a provision of salt fish and rye-flour bread all ready for the start.

News travels fast in Iceland, as it does in Arabia, the Steppes of Russia, in Patagonia and other countries where there are no newspapers and where wayfaring men, even though fools, pass news along with such rapidity that it appears there is no need of telegraphs or telephones, for what is done in one part of the land to-day is known to-morrow miles away, and just as much distorted as it had been disseminated through the medium of the Press. Thus Rangarvallar and all southern Iceland knew of Thorgrimur's intention, and people came from far and near to visit him, for time in Iceland is held valuable, or at the least folk think it so, and, therefore, spend what they prize most after the fashion that most pleases them, and that by talking ceaselessly, mostly of nothing, though they can work as patiently as beavers, when they choose. And thus it came about that at the little church in Upper Horgsdalr a crowd of neighbours had assembled to see the start of Thorgrimur into the unknown wastes.

To say the truth the church was of as mean a presence as was the author of the most part of the faith expounded in its walls. Built all of rubble, roof of Norway pine, the little shingled steeple shaped like a radish, nothing about the building, but the bell cast centuries ago

in Denmark, could be called beautiful ; but still it served its turn, and, as a mosque in a lone " duar " in Morocco, stood always open for the faithful to use by day for prayer, and as a sleeping-place at night. In the churchyard curiously marked and patterned stones bore witness to the supposititious virtues of those long dead, and from the mound on which the church was built the view extended far across lava-fields over the reddish mountains flecked here and there with green and crowned with snow, and in the distance rose the glaciers and the peaks of the unknown and icy Vatna. A landscape dreary in itself, unclothed by trees, wild, desolate, and only beautiful when the sun's rays transformed it, turning the peaks to castles, blotting the black and ragged lava out, and blending all into a vast prismatic play of colour, changing and shifting as the lights ran over limestone, rested on basalt, and lit the granite of the cliffs, making each smallest particle to shine like mica in a piece of quartz. The Icelanders do not hold Sunday as a day of gloom, devoted, as it used to be in England and still remains in the remoter parts of Scotland to which the beneficent breath of latter-day indifference has not yet penetrated, sacred to prayer and drink. So Sunday was the day on which Thorgrimur intended to set out ; dressed in his best he sat at church, his wife and children seated by his side. The service done, he left the church, and, pushing through the ponies all waiting for their owners outside the door, entered his house.

The priest, the " Syselman," the notables, and friends from far and near sat down to dine, and dinner over and the corn brandy duly circulating, Thorgrimur rose up to speak. " My friends, and you the priest and ' Syselman,' and you the notables, and neighbours who have known me from a boy, I drink your health. I go to try what I have dreamed of all my life ; whether I shall succeed no man can tell, but still I shall succeed so far in that I have had the opportunity to follow out my dream. I hold that dreams are the reality of life and that which men call practical, that which down there in Reykjavik the folk call business, is but a dream. ' Snaekoll ' and I depart to cross the Vatna, perhaps not to return, but still to try, and so I drink your health again and say farewell, ' Skoal,' to you all."

Then mounting " Snaekoll," who stood arching up his back, he kissed his wife, and saying to his children, " Stand aside, for ' Snaekoll ' bites worse than a walrus," he took the road. His friends rode with him for a " thingmanslied " upon the way, and when the last few

scattered farms were passed and the track ended in a rising lava-field stretching to the hills, bade him God-speed and watched him sitting erect on "Snaekoll" fade into nothing upon the lava-fields, his horse first sinking out of sight and then his body, bit by bit, till he was gone. The priest, spurring his horse upon a rocky hill, claimed to have seen him last, and said that Thorgrimur never once looked behind, but rode into the desert as he was riding to his home, and that he fancied as he saw him ride he saw the last of the old Berserks disappear. And then the Vatna claimed him, and Thorgrimur of Rangarvallar went his way out of this story and the world's.

But in east Berufjördr, not far from Hargifoss, there dwelt one Hiörtr Helagson, a man of substance, owner of flocks and herds, and as he sat one morning at his "bær" door, drinking his coffee sweetened with lumps of sugar-candy in the Icelandic fashion, waiting until his horse was caught to ride to church, his herdsman entered to inform him that he thought "Hellvite," the devil, had got amongst the horses, for he said, "they run about as if in fear, and the dark chestnut which you ride has a piece bitten out of his back as by a wolf." Then Hiörtr Helagson, although the "Syselman" of Berufjördr and elder of the Church, swore like a horseman when he knows his horse is sick or come by mischief, and, taking down his gun, went to the pasture where his horses fed. The horses all were running to and fro like sheep, and in the corner of the field an object lay, dark grey in colour, like a Greenland bear. But when the "Syselman" had raised his gun, it staggered to its feet, and he, on looking at it, said to his herdsman, "Ansgottes, this is the horse of Thorgrimur of Rangarvallar; he must be dead amongst the ice-fields, and his horse has wandered here." Time passed and "Snaekoll" once again grew round and sleek, although a pest to all the horses in the "tun," and Hiörtr, thinking to cut a figure at a cattle fair, saddled and mounted him. "Snaekoll" stood still, though looking backwards, and when the "Syselman" was seated on his back, arching his spine, the horse plunged violently, and coming down with legs as stiff as posts gave Hiörtr Helagson a heavy fall, and—turning on him like a tiger—would have killed him had not help been nigh. So, from that day, no one essayed to ride the dead man's horse, who ranged about the fields, and, after years, slept with the horses of the Valkyrie. But Hiörtr Helagson had the best ponies in all Berufjördr, hardy, untirable, and "ice-eaters," fiery in spirit, hard to mount, kickers and biters, apt to rear and plunge, fit for the saddle only of

such few commentators as can catch the stirrup at the moment they are up. And when the neighbours talked about their temper and their ways, Hiörtr would say, " Well, yes, they are descended from the horse of Thorgrimur of Rangarvallar ; his name was ' Snaekoll,' and he came to me out of the desert, lean as a bear in spring. You know his master died trying to cross the Vatna, and ' Snaekoll,' how he lived amongst the ice and found his way to Berufjördr I cannot tell. Up in the Vatna there is naught but ice, and yet he must have eaten something ; *what* it was, God knows ! "

S. R. CROCKETT
1860-1914

THE STICKIT MINISTER

**THE RENUNCIATION OF ROBERT FRASER,
FORMERLY STUDENT IN DIVINITY**

THE crows were wheeling behind the plough in scattering clusters, and plumping singly upon the soft, thick grubs which the ploughshare was turning out upon an unkindly world. It was a bask blowy day in the end of March, and there was a hint of storm in the air—a hint emphasised for those skilled in weather lore by the presence of half a dozen sea-gulls, white vagrants among the black coats, blown by the south wind up from the Solway—a snell, Scotch, but not unfriendly day altogether. Robert Fraser bent to the plough handles, and cast a keen and wary eye towards his guide-posts on the ridge. His face was colourless, even when a dash of rain came swirling across from the crest of Ben Gairn, whose steep bulk heaved itself a blue haystack above the level horizon of the moorland. He was dressed like any other ploughman of the south uplands—rough homespun much the worse for wear, and leggings the colour of the red soil which he was reversing with the share of his plough. Yet there was that about Robert Fraser which marked him no common man. When he paused at the top of the ascent, and stood with his back against the horns of the plough, the country man's legacy from Adam of the Mattock, he pushed back his weather-beaten straw hat with a characteristic gesture, and showed a white forehead with blue veins channelling it—a damp, heavy lock of black hair clinging to it as in Severn's picture of John Keats on his deathbed. Robert Fraser saw a couple of black specks which moved smoothly and evenly along the top of the distant dyke of the highway. He stood still for a moment or two, watching them. As they came nearer, they resolved themselves into a smart young man sitting in a well-equipped gig drawn by a showily actioned horse, and driven by a man in livery. As they passed rapidly along the road the hand of the young man appeared in a careless wave of recognition over the stone dyke, and Robert Fraser lifted his slack reins in staid acknowledgment. It was more than a year since the brothers had looked each other so nearly in the eyes. They were Dr. Henry Fraser, the rising physician of Cairn Edward, and his elder

brother Robert, once Student of Divinity at Edinburgh College, whom three parishes knew as "The Stickit Minister."

When Robert Fraser stabled his horses that night and went in to his supper, he was not surprised to find his friend, Saunders M'Quhirr of Drumquhat, sitting by the peat fire in the "room." Almost the only thing which distinguished the Stickit Minister from the other small farmers of the parish of Dullarg was the fact that he always sat in the evening by himself *ben the hoose*, and did not use the kitchen in common with his housekeeper and herd boy save only at meal-times. Robert had taken to Saunders ever since—the back of his ambition broken—he had settled down to the farm, and he welcomed him with shy cordiality.

"You'll take a cup of tea, Saunders?" he asked.

"Thank ye, Robert, I wadna be waur o't," returned his friend.

"I saw your brither the day," said Saunders M'Quhirr, after the tea-cups had been cleared away and the silent housekeeper had replaced the books upon the table. Saunders picked a couple of them up, and, having adjusted his glasses, he read the titles—*Milton's Works*, and a volume of a translation of Dorner's *Person of Christ*.

"I saw yer brither the day; he maun be gettin' a big practice!"

"Ay!" said Robert Fraser, very thoughtfully.

Saunders M'Quhirr glanced up quickly. It was, of course, natural that the unsuccessful elder brother should envy the prosperous younger, but he had thought that Robert Fraser was living on a different plane. It was one of the few things that the friends had never spoken of, though every one knew why Dr. Fraser did not visit his brother's little farm. "He's gettin' in wi' the big fowk noo, an' thinks maybe that his brither wad do him nae credit." That was the way the clash of the countryside explained the matter.

"I never told you how I came to leave the college, Saunders," said the younger man, resting his brow on a hand that even the horn of the plough could not make other than diaphanous.

"No," said Saunders quietly, with a tender gleam coming into the humoursome kindly eyes that lurked under their bushy tussocks of grey eyebrow. Saunders' humour lay near the Fountain of Tears.

"No," continued Robert Fraser, "I have not spoken of it to so many; but you've been a good frien' to me, Saunders, and I think you should hear it. I have not tried to set myself right with folks in the general, but I would like to let you see clearly before I go my ways to Him who seeth from the beginning."

"Hear till him," said Saunders; "man, yer hoast [cough] is no' near as sair as it was i' the back-end. Ye'll be here lang efter me; but lang or short, weel do ye ken, Robert Fraser, that ye need not to pit yersel' richt wi' me. Hev I no' kenned ye sins ye war the size o' twa scrubbers?"

"I thank you, Saunders," said Robert, "but I am well aware that I'm to die this year. No, no, not a word. It is the Lord's will! It's more than seven year now since I first kenned that my days were to be few. It was the year my faither died, and left Harry and me by our lane.

"He left no sillar to speak of, just plenty to lay him decently in the kirkyard among his forebears. I had been a year at the Divinity Hall then, and was going up to put in my discourses for the next session. I had been troubled with my breast for some time, and so called one day at the infirmary to get a word with Sir James. He was very busy when I went in, and never noticed me till the hoast took me. Then on a sudden he looked up from his papers, came quickly over to me, put his own white handkerchief to my mouth, and quietly said, 'Come into my room, laddie!' Ay, he was a good man and a faithful, Sir James, if ever there was one. He told me that with care I might live five or six years, but it would need great care. Then a strange prickly coldness came over me, and I seemed to walk light-headed in an atmosphere suddenly rarefied. I think I know now how the mouse feels under the air-pump."

"What's that?" queried Saunders.

"A cruel ploy not worth speaking of," continued the Stickit Minister. "Well, I found something in my throat when I tried to thank him. But I came my ways home to the Dullarg, and night and day I considered what was to be done, with so much to do and so little time to do it. It was clear that both Harry and me could not go through the college on the little my faither had left. So late one night I saw my way clear to what I should do. Harry must go, I must stay. I must come home to the farm, and be my own 'man'; then I could send Harry to the college to be a doctor, for he had no call to the ministry as once I thought I had. More than that, it was laid on me to tell Jessie Loudon that Robert Fraser was no better than a machine set to go five year.

"Now all these things I did, Saunders, but there's no use telling you what they cost in the doing. They were right to do, and they

were done. I do not repent any of them. I would do them all over again were they to do, but it's been bitterer than I thought."

The Stickit Minister took his head off his hand and leaned wearily back in his chair.

"The story went over the country that I had failed in my examinations, and I never said that I had not. But there were some that knew better who might have contradicted the report if they had liked. I settled down to the farm, and I put Harry through the college, sending all but a bare living to him in Edinburgh. I worked the work of the farm, rain and shine, ever since, and have been for these six years the 'stickit minister' that all the world kens the day. Whiles Harry did not think that he got enough. He was always writing for more, and not so very pleased when he did not get it. He was aye different to me, ye ken, Saunders, and he canna be judged by the same standard as you and me."

"I ken," said Saunders M'Quhirr, a spark of light lying in the quiet of his eyes.

"Well," continued Robert Fraser, lightened by Saunders' apparent agreement, "the time came when he was clear from the college, and wanted a practice. He had been ill-advised that he had not got his share of the farm, and he wanted it sold to share and share alike. Now I kened, and you ken, Saunders, that it's no' worth much in one share let alone two. So I got the place quietly bonded, and bought him old Dr. Aitkin's practice in Cairn Edward with the money.

"I have tried to do my best for the lad, for it was laid on me to be my brother's keeper. He doesna come here much," continued Robert, "but I think he's not so ill against me as he was. Saunders, he waved his hand to me when he was gaun by the day!"

"That was kind of him," said Saunders M'Quhirr.

"Ay, was it no'," said the Stickit Minister, eagerly, with a soft look in his eyes as he glanced up at his brother's portrait in cap and gown, which hung over the china dogs on the mantelpiece.

"I got my notice this morning that the bond is to be called up in November," said Robert. "So I'll be obliged to flit."

Saunders M'Quhirr started to his feet in a moment. "Never," he said, with the spark of fire alive now in his eyes, "never as lang as there's a beast on Drumquhat, or a poun' in Cairn Edward Bank," bringing down his clenched fist upon the Milton on the table.

"No, Saunders, no," said the Stickit Minister, very gently; "I thank you kindly, but *I'll be flitted before that!*"

THE LAMMAS PREACHING

S. R. CROCKETT

AND I further intimate," said the minister, "that I will preach this evening at Cauldshaws, and my text will be from the ninth chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes and the tenth verse, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

"Save us," said Janet MacTaggart, "he's clean forgotten 'if it be the Lord's wull.' Maybe he'll be for gaun whether it's His wull or no'—he's a sair masterfu' man, the minister; but he comes frae the Machars,¹ an' kens little about the jealous God we hae amang the hills o' Gallawa'!"

The minister continued, in the same high, level tone in which he did his preaching: "There are a number of sluggards who lay the weight of their own laziness on the Almighty, saying, 'I am a worm and no man—how should I strive with my Maker?' whenever they are at strife with their own sluggishness. There will be a word for all such this evening at the farmtown of Cauldshaws, presently occupied by Gilbert M'Kissock—public worship to begin at seven o'clock."

The congregation of Barnessock kirk tumbled amicably over its own heels with eagerness to get into the kirkyaird in order to settle the momentous question, "Whose back was he on the day?"

Robert Kirk, Carsethorn, had a packet of peppermint lozenges in the crown of his "lum" hat—deponed to by Elizabeth Douglas or Barr, in Barnbogie, whose husband, Weelum Barr, put on the hat of the aforesaid Robert Kirk by mistake for his own, whereupon the peppermints fell to the floor and rolled under the pews in most unseemly fashion. Elizabeth Kirk is of opinion that this should be brought to the notice of Session, she herself always taking her peppermint while genteelly wiping her mouth with the corner of her handkerchief. Robert Kirk, on being put to the question, admits the facts, but says that it was his wife put them there to be near her hand.

The minister, however, ever ready with his word, brought him to shame by saying, "O Robert, Robert, that was just what Adam said,

¹ The Eastern Lowlands of Wigtownshire.

'The woman Thou gavest me, she gave me to eat!' " The aforesaid Robert Kirk thinks that it is meddling with the original Hebrew to apply this to peppermints, and also says that Elizabeth Kirk is an impudent besom, and furthermore that, as all the country well knows—— (Here the chronicler omits much matter actionable in the civil courts of the realm.)

"Janet," said the minister to his housekeeper, "I am to preach to-night at Cauldshaws on the text, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' "

"I ken," said Janet, "I saw it on yer desk. I pat it ablow the clock for fear the wun's o' heeven micht blaw it awa' like chaff, an' you couldna do wantin' it! "

"Janet MacTaggart," said the minister tartly, "bring in the denner, and do not meddle with what does not concern you."

Janet could not abide read sermons; her natural woman rose against them. She knew, as she had said, that God was a jealous God, and, with regard to the minister, she looked upon herself as His vicegerent.

"He's young an' terrable ram-stam an' opeenionated—fu' o' buiklear, but wi' little gracious experience. For a' that, the root o' the maitter's in 'im," said Janet, not unhopefully.

"I'm gaun to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text's 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might,' " said the minister to the precentor that afternoon, on the manse doorstep.

"The Lord's no' in a' his thochts. I'll gang wi' the lad mysel'," said the precentor.

Now, Galloway is so much out of the world that the Almighty has not there lifted His hand from reward and punishment, from guiding and restraining, as He has done in big towns where everything goes by machinery. Man may say that there is no God when he only sees a handbreadth of smoky heaven between the chimney-pots; but out on the fields of oats and bear, and up on the screes of the hillsides, where the mother granite sticks her bleaching ribs through the heather, men have reached great assurance on this and other matters.

The burns were running red with the mighty July rain when Douglas Maclellan started over the meadows and moors to preach his sermon at the farmtown of Cauldshaws. He had thanked the Lord that morning in his opening prayer for "the bounteous rain wherewith He had seen meet to refresh His weary heritage."

His congregation silently acquiesced, "for what," said they, "could a man from the Machars be expected to ken about meadow hay?"

When the minister and the precentor got to the foot of the manse loaning, they came upon the parish ne'er-do-weel, Ebie Kirgan, who kept himself in employment by constantly scratching his head, trying to think of something to do, and whose clothes were constructed on the latest sanitary principles of ventilation. The ruins of Ebie's hat were usually tipped over one eye for enlarged facilities of scratching in the rear.

"If it's yer wull, minister, I'll come to hear ye the nicht. It's drawing to mair rain, I'm thinkin'!" said the Scarecrow.

"I hope the discourse may be profitable to you, Ebenezer, for, as I intimated this morning, I am to preach from the text, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'"

"Ay, minister," said Ebie, relieving his right hand, and tipping his hat over the other eye to give his left free play. So the three struck over the fields, making for the thorn tree at the corner, where Robert Kirk's dyke dipped into the standing water of the meadow.

"Do you think ye can manage it, Maister Maclellan?" said the precentor. "Ye're wat half-way up the leg already."

"An' there's sax feet o' black moss water in the Laneburn as sure as I'm a leevin' sowl," added Ebie Kirgan.

"I'm to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text is, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might'!" said the minister, stubbornly glooming from under the eaves of his eyebrows as the swarthy men from the Machars are wont to do. His companions said no more. They came to Camelon Lane, where usually Robert Kirk had a leaping pole on either bank to assist the traveller across, but both poles had gone down the water in the morning to look for Robert's meadow hay.

"Tak' care, Maister Maclellan, ye'll be in deep water afore ye ken. O man, ye had far better turn!"

The precentor stood up to his knees in water on what had once been the bank, and wrung his hands. But the minister pushed steadily ahead into the turbid and sluggish water.

"I canna come, oh, I canna come, for I'm a man that has a family."

"It's no' your work; stay where ye are," cried the minister, without looking over his shoulder; "but as for me, I'm intimated to preach this night at Cauldshaws, and my text——"

Here he stepped into a deep hole, and his text was suddenly shut within him by the gurgle of moss water in his throat. His arms rose above the surface like the black spars of a windmill. But Ebie Kirgan sculled himself swiftly out, swimming with his shoeless feet, and pushed the minister before him to the farther bank—the water gushing out of rents in his clothes as easily as out of the gills of a fish.

The minister stood with unshaken confidence on the bank. He ran peat water like a spout in a thunder plump, and black rivulets of dye were trickling from under his hat down his brow and dripping from the end of his nose.

"Then you'll not come any farther?" he called across to the precentor.

"I canna, oh, I canna; though I'm most awfu' wullin'. Kirsty wad never forgie me gin I was to droon."

"Then I'll e'en have to raise the tune myself—though three times 'Kilmarnock' is a pity," said the minister, turning on his heel and striding away through the shallow sea, splashing the water as high as his head with a kind of headstrong glee which seemed to the precentor a direct defiance of Providence. Ebie Kirgan followed half a dozen steps behind. The support of the precentor's lay semi-equality taken from him, he began to regret that he had come, and silently and ruefully plunged along after the minister through the water-logged meadows. They came in time to the foot of Robert Kirk's march dyke, and skirted it a hundred yards upward to avoid the deep pool in which the Laneburn waters were swirling. The minister climbed silently up the seven-foot dyke, pausing a second on the top to balance himself for his leap to the other side. As he did so Ebie Kirgan saw that the dyke was swaying to the fall, having been weakened by the rush of water on the farther side. He rushed instantly at the minister, and gave him a push with both hands which caused Mr. Maclellan to alight on his feet clear of the falling stones. The dyke did not so much fall outward as settle down on its own ruins. Ebie fell on his face among the stones with the impetus of his own eagerness. He arose, however, quickly—only limping slightly from what he called a "bit chack" (nip) on the leg between the stones.

"That was a merciful Providence, Ebenezer," said the minister, solemnly; "I hope you are duly thankful!"

"Dod, I am that!" replied Ebie, scratching his head vigorously with his right hand and rubbing his leg with his left. "Gin I hadna

gi'en ye that dunch, ye micht hae preachen nane at Cauldshaws this nicht."

They now crossed a fairly level clover field, dank and laid with wet. The scent of the clover rose to their nostrils with almost overpowering force. There was not a breath of air. The sky was blue and the sun shining. Only a sullen roar came over the hill, sounding in the silence like the rush of a train over a far-away viaduct.

"What is that?" queried the minister, stopping to listen.

Ebie took a brisk sidelong look at him. "I'm some dootsome that'll be the Skyreburn coming doon off o' Cairnsmuir!"

The minister tramped unconcernedly on. Ebie Kirgan stared at him.

"He canna ken what a 'Skyreburn warnin'' is—he'll be thinkin' it's some bit Machar's burn that the laddies set their whurлие mills in. But he'll turn richt eneuch when he sees Skyreburn roarin' reed in a Lammas flood, I'm thinkin'!"

They took their way over the shoulder of the hill in the beautiful evening, leaning eagerly forward to get the first glimpse of the cause of that deep and resonant roar. In a moment they saw below them a narrow rock-walled gulley, ten or fifteen yards across, filled to the brim with rushing water. It was not black peat water like the Camelon Lane, but it ran red as keel, flecked now and then with a revolving white blur as one of the Cauldshaws sheep spun downward to the sea, with four black feet turned pitifully up to the blue sky.

Ebie looked at the minister. "He'll turn noo if he's mortal," he said. But the minister held on. He looked at the water up and down the roaring stream. On a hill above, the farmer of Cauldshaws, having driven all his remaining sheep together, sat down to watch. Seeing the minister, he stood up and excitedly waved him back. But Douglas Maclellan from the Machars never gave him a look, and his shouting was of less effect than if he had been crying to an untrained collie.

The minister looked long up the stream, and at a point where the rocks came very close together, and many stunted pines were growing, he saw one which, having stood on the immediate brink, had been so much undercut that it leaned over the gulley like a fishing-rod. With a keen glance along its length, the minister, jamming his dripping soft felt hat on the back of his head, was setting foot on the perilous slope of the uneven red-brown trunk, when Ebie Kirgan caught him sharply by the arm.

"It's no' for me to speak to a minister at ordinar' times," he

stammered, gathering courage in his desperation ; " but, oh, man, it's fair murder to try to gang ower that water ! "

The minister wrenched himself free, and sprang along the trunk with wonderful agility. " I'm intimated to preach at Cauldshaws this night, and my text is, ' Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ' ! " he shouted.

He made his way up and up the slope of the fir tree, which, having little grip of the rock, dipped and swayed under his tread. Ebie Kirgan fell on his knees and prayed aloud. He had not prayed since his stepmother boxed his ears for getting into bed without saying his prayers twenty years ago. This had set him against it. But he prayed now, and to infinitely more purpose than his minister had recently done. But when the climber had reached the branchy top, and was striving to get a few feet farther, in order to clear the surging linn before he made his spring, Ebie rose to his feet, leaving his prayer unfinished. He sent forth an almost animal shriek of terror. The tree roots cracked like breaking cables and slowly gave way, an avalanche of stones plumped into the whirl, and the top of the fir crashed downwards on the rocks of the opposite bank.

" Oh, man, call on the name of the Lord ! " cried Ebie Kirgan, the ragged preacher, at the top of his voice.

Then he saw something detach itself from the tree as it rebounded, and for a moment rise and fall black against the sunset. Then Ebie the Outcast fell on his face like a dead man.

In the white coverleted " room " of the farmtown of Cauldshaws a white-faced lad lay, with his eyes closed and a wet cloth on his brow. A large-boned, red-cheeked, motherly woman stole to and fro with a foot as light as a fairy. The sleeper stirred and tried to lift an unavailing hand to his head. The mistress of Cauldshaws stole to his bedside as he opened his eyes. She laid a restraining hand on him as he strove to rise.

" Let me up," said the minister, " I must away, for I'm intimated to preach at Cauldshaws, and my text is, ' Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' "

" My bonny man," said the goodwife tenderly, " you'll preach best on the broad o' yer back this mony a day, an' when ye rise your best text will be, ' He sent from above, He took me, and drew me out of many waters ' ! "

NEIL MUNRO

B. 1864

THE FELL SERGEANT

IT is ill enough to have to die in Glennaora at any season, but to get the word for travelling from it on yon trip in the spring of the year is hard indeed. The gug-gug will halloo in your ears to bid you bide a wee and see the red of the heather creep on Tom-an-dearc; the soft and sap-scented winds will come in at the open door, and you will mind, maybe, of a day long-off and lost when you pulled the copper leaves of the bursting oak and tossed them among a girl's hair. Oh! the long days and the strong days! They will come back to you like the curious bit in a tune that is vexatious and sweet, and not for words or a set thought. You will think of the lambs on the slopes, of the birds tearing through the thousand ways in the woods, of the magic hollows in below the thick-sown pines, of the burns, deep at the bottom of *eas* and *corri*, spilling like gold on a stair. And then, it may be, Solomon Carrier's cart goes by to the town, the first time since the drifts went off the high road; you hear the clatter of the iron shoes, and your mind will go with him to the throng street where the folks are so kind and so free.

But to turn back for the last at that time on Lecknamban must come sorest of all. For Lecknamban has seven sheilings hidden in its hills, where the grass is long and juicy, and five burns that are aye on the giggle like girls at a wedding, and the Aora daunders down in front of the knowe, full of fish for the Duke alone, but bonny for earl or caird.

It was in this same glen, in this same Lecknamban, in the spring of a year, a woman was at her end. She was a woman up in years but not old, a black Bana-Mhuileach who had seen pleasant things and trials like all who come to this queer market-place; but now when the time was come to take the long road with no convoy, only the good times were in her recollection. And though Glennaora was not her calf-country (for she came but a year ago to bide with a friend), she was sweir to turn heel on a place so cosy.

She sat propped up in a box-bed, on pillows, with her face to the open door, and the friendly airs of the country-side came in to stir her

hair. With them came scents of the red earth and the grass, birch-tree, and myrtle, from the moor. But more than all they brought her who was at her end a keen craving for one more summer of the grand world. Strong in her make and dour at the giving-in, she kept talking of the world's affairs and foolishness to the folk about her, who were waiting the Almighty's will and the coming of the stretching-board. Her fingers picked without a stop at the woolly bits of the blankets, and her eyes were on as much of the knowe below the house as she could see out at the open door. It was yellow at the foot with flowers, and here and there was a spot of blue from the cuckoo-brogue.

"Women, women," she said with short breaths, "I'm thinking aye, when I see the flowers, of a man that came from these parts to Duart. He sang 'Mo Nighean Dubh' in a style was never heard before in our place, and he once brought me the scented cuckoo-brogues from Aora."

Said the goodwife, "Aoirig, poor woman, it is not the hour for ancient old *sgewls*; be thinking of a canny going."

"Going! it was aye going with me," said the woman in the bed. "And it was aye going when things were at their best and I was the keener for them."

"It's the way of God, my dear, ochanie!" said one of the two Tullich sisters, putting a little salt in a plate for the coming business.

"O God! it's the hard way, indeed. And I'm not so old as you by two or three clippings."

"Peace, Aoirig, heart; you had your own merry times, and that's as much as most of us have claim to."

"Merry times! merry times!" said Aoirig, humped among the bedding, her mind wandering.

Curls of the peat-reek coiled from the floor among the *cabars* or through the hole in the roof; a lamb ran by the door bleating for its mother, and the whistling of an *uiseag* high over the grass where his nest lay ran out to a thin thread of song. The sound of it troubled the dying woman, and she asked her friends to shut the door. Now and again Maisie would put a wet cloth to her lips and dry the death-sweat from her face. The goodwife was throng among chests and presses looking for sheets, shrouds, and dead-caps.

"It's a pity," said she, "you brought no grave-clothes with you from Mull, my dear."

"Are you grudging me yours?" asked Aoirig, coming round from wandering.

"No, not grudging; fine ye ken it, cousin. But I know ye have them, and it's a pity you should be dressed in another's spinning than your own."

"Ay, they're yonder sure enough: clean and ready. And there's more than that beside them. The linen I should have brought to a man's home."

"You and your man's home! Is it Duart, my dear, among your own folk, or down to Inishail you would have us take you?" Aoirig coughed till the red froth was at her lips.

"Duart is homely and Inishail is holy, sure enough, but I would have it Kilmaheue. They tell me it's a fine kirkyard; but I never had the luck to see it."

"It's well enough, I'll not deny, and it would not be so far to take you. Our folk have a space of their own among the MacVicars, below the parson."

The woman in the bed signed for a sip of water, and they had it fast at her lips.

"Could you be putting me near the Macnicols?" she asked in a weakening voice. "The one I speak of was a Macnicol."

"Ay, ay," said the goodwife; "they were aye gallant among the girls."

"Gallant he was," said the one among the blankets. "I see him now. The best man ever I saw. It was at a wedding——"

The woman's breast racked and the spume splattered over the homespun blankets. Maisie was heating a death-shift at the peat-fire, turning it over in her hands, letting the dry airs into every seam and corner. Looking at her preparation, the dying woman caught back her breath to ask why such trouble with a dead-shift.

"Ye would not have it on damp and cold," said Maisie, settling the business. "I doubt it'll be long in the sleeves, woman, for the goodwife has a lengthy reach."

"It was at a marriage in Glenurchy," said Aoirig in a haver, the pillows slipping down behind her back. "Yonder he is. A slim straight lad. Ronnal, O Ronnal, my hero! What a dancer! not his match in Mull. Aye so——"

A foot could be heard on the road, and one of the two sisters ran out, for she knew whom it would be. They had sent word to the town by Solomon in the morning for Macnicol the wright to come up with the stretching-board, thinking there was but an hour more for poor Aoirig.

Macnicol's were the footsteps, and there he was with the stretching-board under his arm—a good piece of larch rubbed smooth by sheet and shroud, and a little hollow worn at the head. He was a fat man, rolling a bit to one side on a short leg, gross and flabby at the jowl, and thick-lipped; but he might have been a swanky lad in his day, and there was a bit of good-humour in the corner of his eye, where you will never see it when one has been born with the uneasy mind. He was humming to himself as he came up the brae a Badenoch ditty they have in these parts on the winter nights, gossiping round the fire. Whom he was going to stretch he had no notion, except that it was a woman and a stranger to the glen.

The sister took him round to the corner of the house and in at the byre door, and told him to wait. "It'll not be long now," she said.

"Then she's still to the fore," said the wright. "I might have waited on the pay-master's dram at Three Bridges if I had ken't. Women are aye thravn about dying. They'll put it off to the last, when a man would be glad to be taking the road. Who is she, poor woman?"

"A cousin-german of Nanny's," said the sister, putting a bottle before him, and whipping out for some bannock and cheese. He sat down on a shearing-stool, facing the door half open between the byre he was in and the kitchen where Aoirig was at the dying. The stretching-board leaned against the wall outside.

"Aye so gentle, so kind," the woman in the bed was saying in her last dover. "He kissed me first on a day like this. And the blue flowers from Aora?"

In the byre the wright was preeing the drink and paying little heed to food. It was the good warm stuff they brew on the side of Lochow, the heart of the heart of the barley-fields, with the taste of gall and peat, and he mellowed with every quaich, and took to the soft lilting of Niall Ban's song:

"I am the Sergeant fell but kind
(Ho! ho! heroes, *agus ho-e-ro!*);
I only lift but the deaf and blind.
The wearied-out and the rest-inclined.
Many a booty I drive before,

Through the glens, through the glens," said the Sergeant Mor.

Ben the house the goodwife was saying the prayers for the dying woman the woman should have said for herself while she had wind for it, but Aoirig harped on her love-tale. She was going fast, and the

sisters, putting their hands to her feet, could feel that they were cold as the rocks. Maisie's arms were round her, and she seemed to have the notion that here was the grip of death, for she pushed her back.

"I am not so old—so old. There is Seana, my neighbour at Duart—long past the four-score and still spinning—I am not so old—God of grace—so old—and the flowers——"

A grey shiver went over her face; her breast heaved and fell in; her voice stopped with a gluck in the throat.

The women stirred round fast in the kitchen. Out on the clay floor the two sisters pushed the table and laid a sheet on it, the goodwife put aside the pillows and let Aoirig's head fall back on the bed. Maisie put her hand to the clock and stopped it.

"Open the door, open the door!" cried the goodwife, turning round in a hurry and seeing the door still shut.

One of the sisters put a finger below the sneck and did as she was told, to let out the dead one's ghost.

Outside, taking the air, to get the stir of the strong waters out of his head, was the wright.

He knew what the opening of the door meant, and he lifted his board and went in with it under his arm. A wafting of the spring smells came in at his back, and he stood with his bonnet in his hand.

"So this is the end o't?" he said in a soft way, stamping out the fire on the floor.

He had but said it when Eurig sat up with a start in the bed, and the women cried out. She opened her eyes and looked at the man, with his fat face, his round back, and ill-made clothes, and the death-deal under his oxter, and then she fell back on the bed with her face stiffening.

"Here's the board for ye," said the wright, his face spotted white and his eyes staring. "I'll go out a bit and take a look about me. I once knew a woman who was terribly like yon, and she came from Mull."

THE GOOD FAIRY

THE door of the junior schoolroom was almost closed, and for a few moments the small boy with the red head and the brown suit a good size too big for him listened at the aperture. Then with the utmost caution he pushed it open and peeped in. Nobody there ! His expression of anxiety gave place to that of relief. He was in time after all !

With stealthy strides he tip-toed across the floor to the teacher's desk. His left hand raised the lid and held it up while his right transferred something seemingly fragile from his jacket pocket to the interior. For a brief space he gazed at it, half satisfied, half reluctant, then gently closed the lid and strolled over to the hearth, where he proceeded to chafe his hands in a manner that suggested nervousness, if not guilt. His classmates began to drop in. He received his particular friends genially enough, yet latterly with something like condescension.

Ten minutes later school began, and not long afterwards Miss Hamilton, the teacher, had occasion to apply to her desk. The red-haired boy, whose name was John, watched her with a sort of fascination. His lips were parted ; he breathed quickly. His fingers gripped the seat of the form, one of his rather thin legs was tensely twisted round the other. He was going through an experience not new, yet one which had become more exciting with each repetition. Would Miss Hamilton speak this time ? Would she disclose the thing of which he alone could tell the secret ? He feared she would . . . he feared she wouldn't. . . .

Above the desk-lid Miss Hamilton smiled to herself, and he wriggled ; he almost squealed. Then, still smiling, she let down the lid. It was all over ! She wasn't going to say anything. Was he relieved or disappointed ? Possibly both. The strain relaxed only to spring taut again. For stay ! She was lifting the lid again ! . . . Oh, my, she was taking out something ! It was—it *was* his secret !

Miss Hamilton was quite young as well as pretty, and she let out a little giggle as she held up, in full view of the classes, an egg—a fine, big, delicately browned hen's egg ! Several little boys laughed aloud.

" Really," said Miss Hamilton, " I *must* know who the good fairy is !"

As for John, he glowed with self-consciousness and shuddered with ecstasy. A Good Fairy! Assuredly he was not used to being called names like that.

Miss Hamilton continued: "This is the sixth morning within a fortnight that I have found a splendid new-laid egg in my desk; and we all know how scarce and dear eggs are at this season. Well, I am not going to ask the good fairy to stand up just now, but I hope that she—or he"—obviously an afterthought—"will speak to me at the close of school to-day, for, as you know, it is horrid not to be able to say 'Thank you,' especially when one wants to say it as much as I do. And, as you also know, we break up to-morrow for our Christmas holidays. . . . And now we must get on with our lessons."

John's state of bliss lasted until the afternoon, when he fell to wondering what Miss Hamilton would say to him at the end of school. He hoped she would not ask a certain question. After all, he thought it would be better to see her, if possible, without the others knowing. He decided that he would hide somewhere and waylay Miss Hamilton after she had left the school.

Alas for his hopes and plans! In the last hour Miss Hamilton received a telegram telling her that some one was coming to see her, and the instant her duties were finished she hurried away to the station, with sparkling eyes and unwontedly warm complexion, but without the slightest remembrance of the Good Fairy.

John was grievously cast down until, on his way home, a happy thought came to him. On the morrow he would just put another egg in her desk, and that would surely remind her, and everything would be all right!

Yet there's many a slip—even for good fairies.

John lived with an aunt and uncle in a cottage about a mile outside the village. For nearly a year that had been his home. If he regretted the loss of his parents, he never showed it. Certainly they had not been particularly estimable people, and John was a curiously self-contained youngster. On the other hand, his aunt and uncle were undeniably worthy people. If they had not welcomed the orphan with cordiality, they had, at least, striven to do what they deemed their duty towards him. But they were a deplorably solemn pair for a little boy to live with—especially Aunt Brown. Uncle Brown occasionally gave feeble evidence that his suppression was not utterly

complete. He was an essentially mild man, whereas his wife was uncompromisingly stern in all her ways.

It was morning in the cottage. The frost had gone, the snow had come in force. Outside it was scarcely yet light. A lamp illuminated the kitchen, a model of austere orderliness.

Mrs. Brown looked hard at her nephew, who was making to rise from the breakfast-table.

"Feenish yer parritch," she commanded.

"I canna."

"Sit still an' feenish it!" She glanced up at the clock. "Ye're far ower early for the schule."

"I'm no' hungry," said John, with a glance of appeal in the direction of his uncle, who was stolidly absorbing an enormous mass of nutriment.

"Snap it up! Wasters come to want." Mrs. Brown had a great store of proverbs, all of a more or less cheerless nature.

"It'll keep oot the cauld, John," said his uncle, scarcely pausing.

Excitement, apprehension, and other emotions had ruined the boy's appetite for this morning, yet his aunt's will was law. He forced himself to "make a clean plate"—then rose.

"I've tell't ye, ye dinna need to leave sae early," his aunt said sharply.

"Ay, I need," he returned, the least thing rebelliously.

Mr. Brown interposed unexpectedly. "Let him gang. He'll ha'e some ploy on. It's the day afore the holidays."

For once the woman did not argue. With an impatient and indistinct remark about the folly of holidays, she went over to the hearth, and John, with a grateful glance at his uncle, who was once more too busy to notice it, hustled into his coat, seized his bag, and went out.

In the snowy half light he made his way round to the hen-house. Mrs. Brown kept only a few fowls, but they were prize ones and her greatest pride. Every egg was a personal triumph as well as an item of profit. Lately she had sold a dozen to the Manse at the great price of three shillings!

John unlatched the door and—hesitated. He hated that gloomy, cobwebby interior, and being town-bred, he was not a little afraid of the creatures he could scarcely see. But he had braved it all before

for Miss Hamilton's sake, and now it would be for his own sake as well, for he did greatly desire that she should know, ere she went away for the holidays, who the Good Fairy really was. So presently he was inside, and beginning, very gingerly, to feel in the nests.

In the murkiest corner he touched feathers, and a big yellow hen, with fearsome cackle, flew over his shoulder and out of doors, to continue her protests in the snow. And in the same moment a puff of wind blew the door shut with a bang.

John shut his mouth on a screech, but it was a long half-minute before his hand went into the cosy nest. This time, however, he had his reward. A regular whopper of an egg—the most splendid yet!

Just then the door was opened and his aunt appeared. With a black shawl over her head, her gaunt face in the grey light looked very dreadful.

"What's this?" she cried, in a terrible voice. Then "Drap that egg!" Doubtless she meant to say, "Return that egg to the nest!"

Whether the boy took her literally or the egg slipped from his hand need not be discussed. With a sickening little crash it exploded on the floor. Then without a sound the boy bolted past her and away to school.

All was lost! Yet fate had not exhausted her blows. On entering the schoolroom he found it humming with early-birds, some merry, others cross, while Miss Hamilton's desk was covered with offerings mainly of a baked and vegetable nature. Clearly the Good Fairy idea had "caught on," and the teacher on her arrival wished, however graciously she expressed herself, that she had held her tongue on the previous morning.

For John the day was one of misery and despair, and more than once he was near to breaking down. Immediately on the close of school he made for home with all its terrors rather than wait with the crowd to bid good-bye to the beloved teacher, who was leaving by the early train next morning. For the greatest blow of all had fallen. Even Miss Hamilton had been wrong. He was not a Good Fairy. or anything like it. Conscience had at last told him so!

It was evening in the cottage. The meal was over. Everything was tidied up. On the right of the hearth sat Mr. Brown, his uneasy countenance concealed by a weekly paper; on the left Mrs. Brown, cold and stern, knitting steadily. On a stool, set apart from his

relatives, squatted John. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was on his knees, and his eyes were glued to it, but he had not turned a page for half an hour.

There had been a long silence, broken only by the wail of the wind in the chimney, when Mrs. Brown spoke.

"Peter, the time has come."

Her husband started. Behind the paper he muttered: "I canna dae it."

"It's yer duty."

"Weel, I'll see aboot it in the mornin'."

"It's got to be done the nicht, an' the suner the better."

"Oh, woman," said Peter, in a lowered voice, "let it pass this time."

"Spare the rod an' spile the child!" she retorted.

"Fudge!" Peter let fall the paper, possibly in astonishment at his own temerity.

"What?" exclaimed Mrs. Brown, as one who refuses to believe her ears.

"There was plenty o' the rod afore he cam' to us," said Peter, "an' what guid has it done?"

"Man, wud ye set yersel' up against Solomon?"

"Solomon had his gifts," said Peter wearily, "but I never was entirely satisfied wi' the wisdom o' a man that had several gross o' wives an' dear knows hoo mony conc——"

"Whisht!"

John looked up. He had been in disgrace for a long, long time, and was feeling horribly lonely. Perhaps at last they were going to forgive his crime, and here was an opportunity of attracting his uncle's attention.

"Uncle," he said gently, "what's a conk?"

"Haud yer tongue!" snapped his aunt, with an angry look at her man.

Mr. Brown made an odd sound in his throat. Then gravely he answered: "Merely a sort o' lady, John."

"Peter," said his wife, "if ye dinna dae yer duty, ye'll be sorry."

Peter knew he would be sorry either way, but habit reasserted itself and obedience followed. He cleared his throat.

"John," he said ponderously, "I was vexed to hear ye had been—a—tamperin' wi' yer aunt's eggs. What for did ye dae it?"

John, looking wretched, answered nothing.

"Tamperin'!" exclaimed Mrs. Brown. "*Stole* is the word for't! An' eggs that few an' valuable!"

"Maybe he didna ken he was stealin'," said Peter. "Did ye, John?"

"I—I thocht the hens wud lay plenty mair, Uncle Peter."

"Ye had nae business to think what the hens wud dae," his aunt said bitterly. "Peter, he's confessed to stealin' hauf a dizzen in the last twa weeks, but he wudna confess what he did wi' them. Ask him!"

"John, what did ye dae wi' the eggs?"

No answer; for John had made up his mind that, whatever happened, he would not get his teacher into trouble.

"There ye see!" cried Mrs. Brown, at last. "If he had confessed, I micht ha'e overlooked it. Dae yer duty, Peter, as ye promised me ye wud. It's for his ain guid," she paused. "I'll gang oot to the hen-hoose till ye get it ower." She nodded in the direction of a cane, commonly used on carpets, that stood against the wall beside his chair, where she had placed it earlier. Then, taking up her shawl and a candle, she left the kitchen.

"The Lord help me!" sighed Peter, and added under his breath: "I wish I had Solomon here!" Without looking at the boy he said: "John, will ye tell me what ye did wi' the eggs?"

"I canna."

"Weel, I'm dam—I mean, I'm exceedin'ly sorry, but I'll ha'e to punish ye—gi'e ye a lickin', in fac'. Prepare yersel'!"

"Hoo am I to prepare masel'?" quavered John.

With a sudden inspiration the man pointed with the cane to the red cloth on the table. "Tak' it an' wrap it roun' yer—a legs."

A new form of torture, perhaps, but John obeyed.

Mr. Brown advanced and took his victim carefully by the coat collar. "Noo mind," he said, "I've got to try for to hurt ye. Ma duty, ye ken," he added, rather apologetically. "Are ye ready?" He flourished the cane and brought it down gingerly on the tablecloth. "Did that hurt ye?"

"Ay—na, it didna, Uncle Peter."

"Honest lad!" A slightly harder stroke. "Did that?"

"Na."

After several cuts the tormentor paused, looking helpless.

"Uncle Peter," said John, "ye'd best lick me proper, or she'll no' be pleased wi' ye."

"Tits! Ye'll break ma heart! There!" (*whack*). "Was that no sair?"

"A wee bittie."

(*Whack*.) "An' that?"

John winced.

"It wud be better if ye cried oot," said Mr. Brown, and struck once more. "Yell!"

John gave a squeak. Then suddenly, "Oh, Uncle Peter, ye're awfu' kind," he said, and fell to sobbing bitterly.

With a bad word Peter flung the cane across the kitchen. "God forgi'e us a'," he muttered, and unwrapping the cloth, replaced it on the table.

"John," he said, and patted his nephew's shoulder, "dinna greet. This'll be a secret atween us. An' I'll tak' yer word if ye promise never to gang near the hens again, excep' by yer aunt's orders. I suppose ye sooked the eggs—a natural proceedin' for a hungry juvenile in cauld weather. An' ye'll tell yer aunt yer sorry, an' try to mak' it up to her—eh?" Unable to speak, the boy nodded emphatically.

"Guid lad! Tell her the morn, an' gang to yer bed noo. Oh, wait a meenute! Here's anither secret. Tell naebody."

John felt something put into his hand and himself guided from the kitchen. In the passage Peter took up a small safety lamp and carried it into the box of a room where the boy slept.

"Guid nicht, John, an' forget yer troubles," he said, and closed the door.

After a while John opened his hand expecting to find a ha'penny—and lo and behold—a shilling! It was long—for a little boy, at any rate—before he slept, but when slumber arrived it found him perfectly happy, for everything had come right and he was, without the faintest shadow of doubt, a Good Fairy after all.

When Mrs. Brown returned to the kitchen, her husband, from behind the trembling weekly paper, managed to say:

"His sufferin's was terrible, Elizabeth. I hope ye didna hear him." She sat down as though very tired and moistened her lips.

"I had ma fingers in ma ears," she said.

It was morning in the cottage.

"Is John no' up yet?" inquired the uncle, gazing at the steaming dish in front of him.

" I thocht I wud let him rest, seein' he's got his holidays," returned the aunt.

He stared at her, and possibly she did not like it, for she moved from the kitchen, remarking, " I'll see if he's wauken noo."

A moment later Peter heard her cry out.

In the small room he found her standing at the window, which was open, in one hand a scrap of exercise paper, in the other a shilling. The paper bore the following words pencilled in a childish hand :

" This shilling has bot the eggs I stole. With thanks from John."

The man and woman suddenly looked ten years older. With one accord they whispered—

" Whaur can he be ? "

The porter was slamming the doors, when a small boy with a red head rushed from the snow into the station and along the platform, his countenance expressing acute anxiety.

Fortunately Miss Hamilton was looking out of the open window.

" What is it, John ? " she cried.

Though he could not speak just then, his desire to do so was plain.

At the risk of being left behind, the girl descended.

" What's the matter ? Tell me, John." She bent over him and put her arm round his shoulders. " Come, dearie "—giving him a squeeze.

At last he got it out in a hoarse whisper.

" Please, I'm the Guid Fairy . . . but—but I'll no' be able to fetch ye ony mair eggs."

THE WIFE

MACRAE, the shepherd, was one of your home-loving kind ; a placid man, as a general thing, who appreciated his comforts and was best pleased when, with pipe in mouth and body at rest, he could lounge by his own fireside.

Thus there was contentment in his heart when on that night—the night of the weekly market at Invernahyne—he turned at last on to the moorland track at a point half a mile or so along which his lonely cottage squatted. He had got through with his work sooner than he had expected, but the exertions of the day had tired him, and the depressing nature of the night seemed somehow to add to this tiredness.

The skies had been grey all through the muggy day, and now, at gloaming time, the shoulders of the mountains were being wrapped about snugly by coverlets of mist and the fir woods were mere irregular slabs of gloom.

Well, thank the Lord there was a warm kitchen waiting for him, and Jean would have a hearty meal ready very soon.

With head bent a little and hands behind him linked loosely about his shepherd's crook, he trudged through the mud steadily—steadily that was until, on a sudden, he heard some one whistling lowly the chorus of a Highland folk-song.

His body stiffening, MacRae jerked his head up, and, after hesitating for a moment or two, went forward again more slowly. Through the dusk he could see now the approaching figure of a man, and because with white heat there leaped in his mind the certainty that this man must be Andrew Cairns, his lips pressed together and his fingers gripped more tightly at the crook.

He had never liked Cairns, and of late his dislike had been merging into something more bitter, for disturbing whisperings had reached him. There had been irritating warnings given by recognised gossips in the village, and even Jean herself, though she had striven to keep from him anything which might cause distress, had hinted, when he broached the matter to her half jokingly, that Cairns seemed to seek

her out when opportunity offered, and on such occasions was inclined to say foolish things.

There was nothing serious in it, of course, but still, MacRae had his full share of Highland pride, and a wonderful sense of dignity where his wife was concerned.

As he moved forward now he became aware, first, that the whistling had ceased, and, second, that the man who had whistled was stepping carefully from the track and into the shelter of a clump of great whin bushes.

This action on the other's part perplexed the shepherd at first, but gradually some strange emotion stirred in him and moment by moment expanded until it gripped him irresistibly. Easy-going and slow to move though he was, the blood in him could run hotly enough at times, and now he made no effort to beat back his rising wrath. So Andrew Cairns was wishful to avoid meeting him, was he! Very well then! That meant that the other would be called upon to explain a thing or two.

Just by the whins MacRae paused and called out the young farmer's name.

"You needn't hide there, Cairns," he said, peering searchingly into the darkness of the bushes. "I saw you step aside from the track a moment or two back, an' I'll be wantin' a word with you, if you please."

Some seconds passed in silence, then the bushes were parted and a tall man stepped out, arrogant of face and with a lie upon his lips.

"Hullo, Hamish!" he started. "So it's you, is it? You don't sound terrible good-humoured the night, but mebbe you'll explain why in a minute. What d'you mean by talkin' about me hidin'? That's a daft-like thing to say. Why should I hide from you, or from any other man, for the matter of that? If you want to know, I'd been sittin' by those bushes earlier in the evening, an' I'd left my pipe ahind me. I was just havin' a look round for it the now."

A short exclamation of impatience came from MacRae.

"D'you think you're dealin' with a child or a fool that you talk that way to me?" he asked. "It's a lie that you told, Cairns, an' you know it."

The other laughed—a laugh deeply tinged with nervousness but finishing off blusteringly. He conceived this simple-minded shepherd as being a man with whom he could afford to play the high hand—a

man of whom he had no reason in the world to be even momentarily afraid. And yet, despite the words which presently he spoke, and despite the very bold front which he presented, a mysterious fear did gnaw at him. It was very vaguely defined so far, and, conscious of his physical strength and of his ready tongue, he contrived to brush the fear aside.

"You shouldn't get drinkin' when you go to the market," he said. "Whisky, an' especially the kind that MacBain sells, doesn't do your sort of man any good. A lie, you say?" he went on, his voice rising with the change in his mood. "By God, MacRae, you're not afraid, for I don't take that sort of talk from any man."

"You'll have to take it from me, then. I say again that you lied! I say that you were tryin' to hide from me, an' I say that you wanted to do that because you've been at my cottage an' pesterin' my wife with your love-makin' speeches. An' if I'm proved to be right in thinkin' that, then, as sure as you an' me are standin' here an' facin' each other, I'll settle with you, Cairns, and I'll settle now."

The other moved his shoulders, and then, swayed by vanity and a belief in his power to meet successfully any onslaught that might be made, spoke with reckless insolence.

"Well, if you want to have it that way, have it," he said. "Mebbe I did call at your cottage, an' mebbe I did have a bit word or two with Jean. What then?"

MacRae held the crook in his right hand, and the fingers of his left were opening and shutting convulsively. Big drops of sweat had oozed out upon his brow, and his throat was hot and dry.

"You can dare to stand an' talk to me that way!" he managed, his voice strained and hoarse. "You can dare! Man, if you've been worryin' my Jean, I'll feel like chokin' the life out of you with these two hands of mine! Oh, you needn't grin like that so foolish! I mean what I say, every word. An' now let's have it—the real truth, I mean. Did you go to my cottage an' seek out my wife?"

"I did, mister. There you have the thing plump and plain! An' what's more, I'll go again if I feel like it!"

"You'll go again?" The words came in a sort of cracking whisper. "No, I don't think that you'll ever go again. Not if I can stop you, leastways. Sneakin' coward you are—to creep down here while I'm away, an' then to creep home again just before I'm due back. But

I spoiled things a bit the night by gettin' home sooner than usual. Oh, I've heard things about you, Cairns, but I didn't just believe them. I couldn't; it seemed too kind o' rotten a game altogether for a man to play. I spoke to Jean about you not more'n ten days ago."

The other's lips twisted.

"You did, did you? An' what was Jean pleased to say about me?"

"Not much, for she wouldn't be wantin' to upset me. But she said enough to let me understand that you'd make love to her quick enough if she'd let you."

Even in the gathering darkness he could see the sneer that came to the farmer's face. And the sneer, almost more than the words that followed it, unleashed the leaping, quivering hate in his heart. Jean had been insulted—fouly and grossly she had been insulted. And she was his little Jean—his well-loved mate.

"You needn't be so funny about it," Cairns said, and, though his words were arrogantly challenging, he stepped back a pace while he spoke them. "Go back to this wonderful wife of yours, mister, an' ask her whether she's got the same kind of kisses for you as she had for me a wee while back? Why, you fool——"

It was then that MacRae, with a crazy clamouring in his brain, and with upon his lips a guttural, primitive muttering, struck. Twice he struck, and behind the blow there was all the force of his great frame trembling with the blood lust of animal battle.

At the first blow Cairns swayed upon his heels; at the second a groan came from him spasmodically, and, toppling backwards, he fell, a huddled heap, upon the rough roadway.

In an instant MacRae was beside him, his sinewy, merciless fingers about the other's throat; but their pressure was not needed. His second blow had killed the man who had dared to speak lightly of the dearly loved Jean.

It was a full minute before the reality of what he had done became clear to the shepherd. Then, with a spirit of horror laying clammy fingers upon him, he crouched there in the mud of the lane, his breath coming spasmodically, his wide, crazed eyes staring at the face of the dead man.

Cairns' head lay rather grotesquely to one side, and for a moment MacRae touched the chin with his fingers; then he started back,

shivering. It seemed that through the mugginess of the night a little chill tongue of breeze came to lick upon his face.

Trembling fingers going to his throat to ease the sudden tightness of his collar, he shook his head as a great dog might have done. Then wrath beating down fear for the moment, he looked again at the face below his own.

"Liar!" he exclaimed jerkily.

Shutting his eyes, he drew the body close to the narrow ditch at the side of the lane, and then, having looked around him fearfully, set off with long strides towards the cottage. Moment by moment as he went forward the awfulness of the tragedy grew upon him. He, Hamish MacRae, who, all his days, had been a decent-living man, quarrelling with none and doing what little kindnesses he could, was a murderer!

Soon or late—and it might quite well be soon—the body of Cairns would be found. And when that happened the man for whom the police and their helpers would search would inevitably be himself. They must not get him—should not get him—not if he and Jean between them could prevent that. It was of Jean that he was thinking most, though, indeed, fear had entered into him and claimed him as a victim.

When he stood at last outside his cottage door his hair was dank with sweat, and, try as he would, he could not stop the twitching of his facial muscles nor the convulsive movement of his fingers. For long seconds he stood there in the darkened porch, trying to gain some measure of self-control. But just when it seemed that he was succeeding, the vision of Cairns' pallid, dead face wrenched at his frayed nerves so that they snapped, and, snapping, left a weak thing on the verge of hysteria where before there had been a strong man.

Into the lamp-lighted kitchen he went blunderingly, and when he saw his wife sitting in her armchair, her pretty fingers busy with the knitting of a sock, he paused, and, putting up an arm, drew the rough sleeve of the jacket across his brow. When the arm fell to his side again the tweed was smeared with perspiration which glinted in the light.

A smile upon her lips, his wife turned towards him; but on the instant the smile went.

"Hamish!" she cried; and in a dull sort of way he noted how

her fingers gripped about the worsted which she held. "Hamish, what is it? You look—you look like death!"

"Death?" he repeated; and the sweetness of her face seared his heart then. "Wife, there's been death to-night, an' now I've got to try an' save my own life. Listen, an' hear me out afore you say anything. You know the old sheiling three miles up on the moor an' just below Raven's Crag?"

She nodded. Her lips were parted, but she did not speak.

"Well, I'm goin' there now," he went on, "because I daren't stay here. Up there I'll be able to think out some plan of escape. I can't stay here; I'd choke if I tried to. I've got to be off. But God, He knows that I didn't mean to kill the man, and that he made me strike him—he with that devil's tongue of his."

She put a hand up to her hair, smoothing it nervously. Then she wetted her lips.

"Sit down!" she said. "Sit down, an' tell me what you mean!"

But a shudder shook him.

"I can't!" he said. "I can't stop here, not a minute more! Some one might come. In the sheiling I'll be safe, an' then I can wrestle things out an' think o' some way o' escape! You know where I'll be—at the sheiling?"

"Yes."

"If any one comes here within the next hour or two, say that I haven't been home—that you don't know where I am. An' then, when things are quiet, come out to me, lass, an' bring some food an' drink, an', better still, your dear words of love an' trust. I'll be waitin' for you an' prayin' for your coming."

The knitting fell from her fingers and her hands gripped at the arms of her chair.

"What have you done?" she whispered. "For Heaven's sake, Hamish, tell me!"

He backed towards the door.

"I met Andrew Cairns," he said, "an' I challenged him with havin' pestered you. He laughed at me an' insulted you. I struck him then—an' I killed him. I think I see him now! I didn't mean to kill him, but I did. I'm a murderer, Jean. That's what they'll say!"

A small, half-crushed cry came from the woman, and then she lay back limply, unconscious.

He went to her, and put his arms about her and kissed her lips. Then, arranging her more comfortably, he turned and went from the cottage, for terror was goading him.

Out on the moor a breeze was stirring, and it breathed upon his face kindly. At first he walked rapidly, and then for nearly a mile he ran. Now and again he stumbled over a tuft of heather or some unseen stone; and when at last the rickety walls of the hut showed dimly before him, his breath was coming in great sobbing gasps.

Once inside, he drew the creaking door behind him and lay down upon a heap of dried bracken. His lips twitched in the formation of strange, broken sentences.

"Jeannie!" he muttered. "Oh, dear Lord, watch over my Jeannie an' me! He was a beast an' a liar! Mebbe it had to come!"

Then he leaned over and lay inert, his face resting in the crook of his elbow.

Outside on the moor everything was very still. The eeriness of the night touched him. Every now and then he could hear the breeze sough softly through the clump of fir-trees near at hand. And once when he heard the whir of great wings, and a little later, from the hillside, the cry of a whaup,¹ he sat up and stared into the darkness, an agony of terror in his heart.

Presently he went on his knees, and, with his fingers gripped about each other, prayed mumblingly.

"Dear God," he said, "You've watched over her an' me always, and You've protected us from harm an' blessed us day by day. You'll be knowin' that there isn't real bad in me, an' that when I struck that man it was just through the anger that he bred in me by sayin' what he said. Take away from me the fear that is in me now; help me to be strong, an' give calm an' courage to my wife. I'm askin' this for her, an' You know that's true. Forgive me an' comfort me. Amen!"

He rose then and stretched himself, and, when some seconds had passed, seated himself among the bracken and dared to fill and light his pipe. But the tobacco could not soothe him, could not still his jangled nerves.

Once he went to the door and, pulling it open, looked out into the night. A drab world lay before him, with a mist creeping across it furtively. He was hungry, but more than for food he craved for something to drink.

¹ Curlew.

Leaning against the door-post care went from his face for a second or two and his eyes softened. He was picturing Jean, plodding bravely across the trackless moor to him, and carrying with her not merely food and drink, but what he had told her he prized so much more deeply, a loving, faithful heart and words of sympathy and high hope.

Going back to the couch of bracken, he half lay, half sat there, his whirling, tormented brain striving to formulate some scheme of escape. But he could not think.

As the hours went past, the small, mysterious sounds of the night-time became more frequent, more noticeable, and at every one of these sounds MacRae started, dread clutching at him. Once a sheep coughed, and the cough was so like that of a man that the shepherd, though a lifetime's experience had made the sound familiar, got noiselessly to his feet and stood quivering, with fists shut. Next moment a spurious laugh jarred in his throat, and he lay down again.

He began to worry then about Jean. He had no watch, but he deemed that she should have been with him by this time. Of course, she had been in a faint when he had gone from the cottage, and it might be that she had not regained consciousness for a long time. What if she had never regained consciousness? What if the night held a double tragedy?

The horror of the thought set, as it seemed, chill water to run through his veins. The very awfulness of its agony made him cast it out at last, and he sat forward, hands between his knees, and his face somewhat more calm. So the minutes plodded past—a dreary, listless procession.

He lay flat at last, his head close to the cold earth floor, and lying so, there came to him, very faintly at first, a sound that thrilled—the sound of feet among the mist-drenched heather.

Sitting up, he leaned his head to one side and listened, palpitating. The swishing of the feet grew gradually louder, and he fancied that he heard the sound of voices. But, of course, that could not be, he told himself. And then, through a chink in the flimsy wooden wall, he saw a swinging light. Yes, somebody was coming towards the sheiling, somebody who carried a lantern. It was Jean coming to him, after all, surely—or could it be that the local constable and some of the villagers had managed to track him?

Just for an instant the idea of fleeing from his place of shelter and

out on to the moor came to him. Then, sighing, he shook his head mechanically.

Nearer and nearer came the sound of footsteps, but no longer did he hear, or fancy that he heard, voices. It was his Jean coming to him, and with the thought his eyes lighted and his pulses began to beat out a mad tattoo.

"Jean," he whispered—"my Jean—at last!"

He did not move forward but stood where he was, his limbs weak. The rough door was thrown open, and the rays of a lantern lighted up the gloomy building.

Once again the sound of hoarse voices came like a fearful echo to the ears of the fugitive. Then his senses cleared, for he saw his wife in the doorway.

He tried to call out to her and could not, but he stretched forth his arms, his fingers tingling to touch hers. He saw her pale face with the wind-blown hair straggling across her brow; and then he saw her eyes, and his left hand came thumping back to his breast, and stayed there pressed tight above his heart.

For three or four moments the woman stood looking at him. Then she swung the lantern round to where, behind her, a little group of men stood, one of them in uniform.

Her free hand pointed shakily towards her husband, and the words that came from her came in what was almost a scream.

"There," she said, "there he is! Take him!"



